# 三国志 ㉔

## 孔明の大論陣

横山光輝

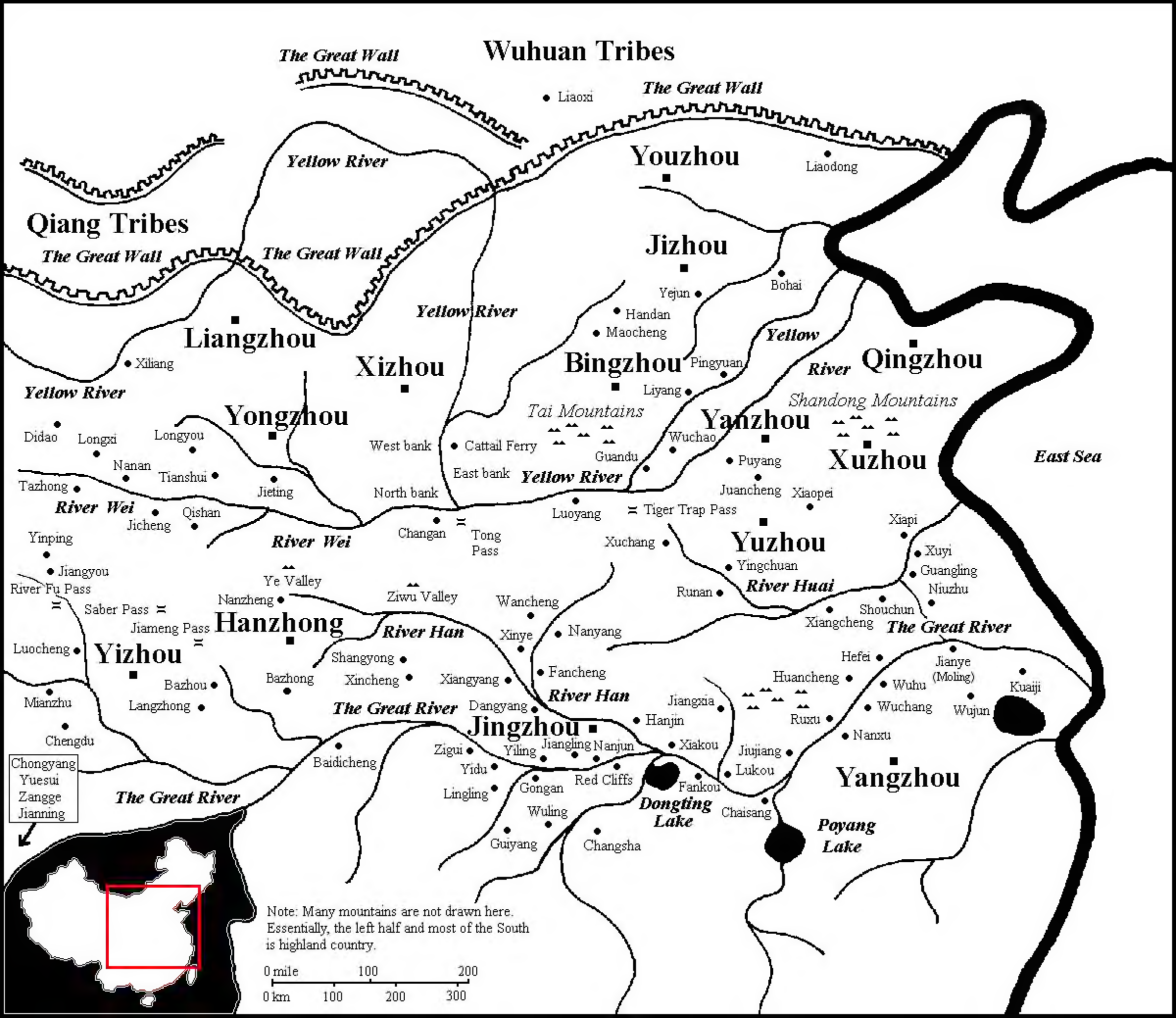
希望コミックス

SANGOKUSHI 24

# KONGMING'S PERSUASION

ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING

YOKOYAMA MITSUTERU


Wuhuan Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Liaoxi
Youzhou
Liaodong
Yellow River
Qiang Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Jizhou
Bohai
Yejun
Handan
Maocheng
Yellow River
Liangzhou
Xizhou
Bingzhou
Pingyuan
Yellow River
Qingzhou
Xiliang
Yellow River
Liyang
Shandong Mountains
Tai Mountains
Yongzhou
Yanzhou
Didao
Longxi
Longyou
West bank
Cattail Ferry
Wuchao
Guandu
Xuzhou
East Sea
Nanan
East bank
Yellow River
Puyang
Tianshui
Tazhong
Jieting
North bank
Juancheng
Xiaopei
River Wei
Qishan
Luoyang
Tiger Trap Pass
Jicheng
Changan
Tong Pass
Xiapi
Yuzhou
Yinping
River Wei
Xuchang
Xuyi
Jiangyou
Ye Valley
Yingchuan
Guangling
River Fu Pass
Ziwu Valley
Runan
River Huai
Niuzhu
Saber Pass
Nanzheng
Wancheng
Shouchun
Jiameng Pass
Hanzhong
River Han
Xinye
Nanyang
Xiangcheng
The Great River
Luocheng
Yizhou
Shangyong
Hefei
Jianye (Moling)
Fancheng
Huancheng
Bazhou
Bazhong
Xincheng
Xiangyang
Wuhu
Kuaiji
River Han
Jiangxia
Mianzhu
Langzhong
The Great River
Dangyang
Wuchang
Wujun
Ruxu
Hanjin
Jingzhou
Chengdu
Nanxu
Zigui
Yiling
Jiangling
Nanjun
Xiakou
Jiujiang
Baidicheng
Yidu
Lukou
Yangzhou
Chongyang
Yuesui
Zangge
Jianning
Red Cliffs
Fankou
Gongan
Lingling
Dongting Lake
Chaisang
Wuling
Poyang Lake
Guiyang
Changsha
The Great River
Note: Many mountains are not drawn here.
Essentially, the left half and most of the South
is highland country.
0 mile 100 200
0 km 100 200 300

# SANGOKUSHI'S CAST OF CHARACTERS

## PART 1: CHARACTERS TO KEEP IN MIND

CAO CAO MENGDE:
THE AMBITIOUS AND MACHIAVELLIAN HERO OF SANGOKUSHI. HAVING BECOME THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN, HE HAS RELEGATED EMPEROR XIAN AS A MERE PUPPET RULER. AS OF VOLUME 20, HE HAS DEFEATED YUAN SHAO, BRINGING ALL OF NORTHERN CHINA UNDER HIS CONTROL.

CHEN DENG:
THE SON OF CHEN GUI AND FORMERLY TAO QIAN OF XUZHOU'S SUBORDINATE. HE AND HIS FATHER SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL.

CHEN GUI:
FATHER OF CHEN DENG WHO SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL. DESPITE SECRETLY WORKING TOGETHER WITH LIU BEI AGAINST CAO CAO, CAO CAO SPARES HIS LIFE AND ALLOWS HIM TO CONTINUE LIVING IN XUZHOU.

CHENG GONG:
A CITY GUARD CAPTAIN WHO ARRESTED CAO CAO, ONLY TO FREE AND ESCAPE WITH HIM AFTER SYMPATHIZING WITH HIS STORY. HOWEVER, HE LATER DEFECTS TO LU BU AND SERVES AS HIS ADVISOR. IN VOLUME 14, HE IS EXECUTED ALONG WITH LU BU.

EMPRESS HE:
ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HER BEAUTY WAS NOTICED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS WHO THEN PRESENTED HER TO EMPEROR LING. SHE SOON BECAME EMPEROR LING'S FAVOURITE CONSORT AND GAVE BIRTH TO PRINCE LIU BIAN. HOWEVER, SHE AND HER SON WERE REMOVED FROM POWER AND KILLED BY LI RU WHEN DONG ZHUO CAME TO POWER.

DIAN WEI:
CAO CAO'S PERSONAL BODYGUARD, RENOWNED FOR HIS STRENGTH. HE IS ALSO KNOWN BY THE NICKNAME, "E LAI," IN REFERENCE TO THE MIGHT GENERAL OF THE SAME NAME WHO SERVED UNDER KING ZHOU OF SHANG. IN VOLUME 12, HE WAS KILLED DURING ZHANG XIU'S PLOT TO KILL CAO CAO.

DIAO CHAN:
A SLAVE GIRL OF WANG YUN, WHO RAISED HER AS HIS OWN DAUGHTER. SHE AND WANG YUN PLOTTED TO DISTANCE LU BU FROM DONG ZHUO BY HAVING HER SEDUCE BOTH MEN. IN VOLUME 8, SHE COMMITTED SUICIDE AFTER ACCOMPLISHING HER GOAL.

DONG CHENG:
ELDER STATESMAN OF HAN WHO IS EMPEROR XIAN'S CONFIDANT. EMPEROR XIAN SECRETELY ASKS HIM TO ELIMINATE CAO CAO, WHO NOW RULES THE IMPERIAL COURT AS CHANCELLOR. IN VOLUME 17, HE IS EXECUTED AFTER HIS ASSASSINATION PLOT IS FOUND OUT BY CAO CAO.

DONG ZHUO:
GOVERNOR OF LIANGZHOU WHO LATER SEIZED CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND SEATED HIMSELF AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN, BECOMING AN INFAMOUS TYRANT. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN, LU BU.

GONGSUN ZAN:
GOVERNOR OF BEIPING AND FRIEND TO LIU BEI. HE WAGES WAR AGAINST YUAN SHAO AFTER THE LATTER TRICKS HIM AND KILLS HIS YOUNG BROTHER. IN VOLUME 15, YUAN SHAO'S ARMY CONQUERS BEIPING, CAUSING GONGSUN ZAN TO COMMIT SUICIDE.

GUAN YU YUNCHANG:
SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER TO LIU BEI AND SWORN OLDER BROTHER TO ZHANG FEI. HE IS AS FIERCE AS GUAN YU BUT IS MORE RESTRAINED AND CALM IN HIS MANNERISMS.

GUAN PING:
GUAN YU'S ADOPTED SON. ADOPTED IN VOLUME 19.

GUO JIA:
THE TALENTED STRATEGIST AND ADVISOR TO CAO CAO. HE DIES FROM ILLNESS DURING CAO CAO'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE YUAN FAMILY (UNSHOWN IN MANGA).

JIA XU:
THE SHREWD STRATEGIST AND ADVISOR TO ZHANG XIU. HE AND ZHANG XIU PLOTS A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON CAO CAO, BUT SUCCEEDS IN KILLING DIAN WEI. IN VOLUME 16, HE AND ZHANG XIU DEFECT TO CAO CAO'S SIDE.

LI RU:
CUNNING ADVISOR TO DONG ZHUO. WITH HIS ADVICE, DONG ZHUO FIRMLY SECURES HIS SEAT AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS KILLED ALONG WITH DONG ZHUO WHEN LU BU REBELS.

LIU BEI XUANDE:
THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF SANGOKUSHI. A KIND AND VIRTUOUS MAN, SAID TO BE THE DESCENDANT OF EMPEROR JING OF HAN. HE HAS SWORN AN OATH OF BROTHERHOOD WITH GUAN YU AND ZHANG FEI. AFTER LOSING XUZHOU TO CAO CAO, HE IS CURRENTLY UNDER THE CARE OF LIU BIAO.

LIU BIAO:
THE GOVERNOR OF JINGZHOU. HE IS CURRENTLY FACING DOMESTIC TROUBLES OVER THE PROBLEM OF WHICH SON TO MAKE HIS HEIR (LIU QI, LIU CONG).

LIU XIE (EMPEROR XIAN OF HAN):
FORMERLY KNOWN AS PRINCE OF CHENLIU, HE IS THE CURRENT EMPEROR OF HAN. HE BECAME THE EMPEROR WHEN DONG ZHUO FORCIBLY DETHRONED HIS HALF-BROTHER LIU BIAN.

LU BU:
HE IS SAID TO BE THE STRONGEST WARRIOR IN THE LAND WHO RIDES ON THE FASTEST HORSE IN THE LAND, THE RED HARE. IN VOLUME 14, HE WAS BETRAYED BY HIS SUBORDINATES (HOU CHENG, WEI XU, SONG XIAN), WHO HANDED HIM OVER TO CAO CAO. HE BEGS CAO CAO FOR MERCY BUT IS EXECUTED DUE TO LIU BEI'S DISAGREEMENT.

MA TENG:
GOVERNOR OF XILIAN AND FATHER OF MA CHAO. UNLIKE THE ACTUAL HISTORICAL FIGURE, HE IS DEPICTED AS A HAN LOYALIST WHO SIGNS DONG CHENG'S BLOOD SEAL PLEDGE.

SHUI JING:
HIS REAL NAME IS SIMA HUI BUT HE IS MORE COMMONLY KNOWN BY HIS TAOIST NAME, SHUI JING (MEANING WATER MIRROR). HE IS THE TEACHER OF ZHUGE LIANG, PANG TONG, AND XU SHU.

SUN CE:
ELDEST SON OF SUN JIAN. IN VOLUME 19, ASSASSINS MAKE A FAILED ATTEMPT AT HIS LIFE, BUT SUCCEEDS IN SEVERELY WEAKENING HIM. HIS HEALTH DECLINES FURTHER AS HE IS DRIVEN MAD BY THE SPIRIT OF YU JI, WHICH EVENTUALLY LEADS TO HIS DEATH.

SUN JIAN:
BORN IN WU COMMANDERY, HE WAS THE GOVERNOR OF CHANGSHA. IN VOLUME 5, HE PARTICIPATES IN THE ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO. DURING THIS PERIOD, HE FINDS THE IMPERIAL SEAL, WHICH CAUSES YUAN SHAO AND LIU BIAO TO TURN ON HIM. IN VOLUME 7, HE TRIES TO EXACT HIS REVENGE ON LIU BIAO, ONLY TO BE KILLED IN BATTLED.

SUN QUAN:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF SUN CE. AS OF THE END OF VOLUME 19, HE HAS SUCCEEDED HIS OLDER BROTHER SUN CE AS THE RULER OF WU STATE.

TAISHI CI:
SUN CE'S TRUSTED GENERAL WHO DEFECTED TO SERVE SUN CE AFTER BEING CAPTURED IN VOLUME 11.

TAO QIAN:
THE KIND GOVERNOR OF XUZHOU WHO ACCIDENTALLY INVOKES CAO CAO'S WRATH WHEN HIS DISLOYAL SUBORDINATE ZHANG KAI KILLS CAO CAO'S FATHER, CAO SONG.

THE TEN ATTENDANTS:
A CORRUPT GROUP OF 10 EUNUCHS WHO WERE THE HIGHEST RANKING MINISTERS OF THE IMPERIAL COURT. THEY SUCCEEDED IN ASSASSINATING GENERAL HE JIN BUT WERE LATER KILLED BY HE JIN'S ARMY LED BY YUAN SHAO.

WANG YUN:
AN OLD MAN WHO HOLDS THE POST OF MINISTER OF THE MASSES, ONE OF THE 3 HIGHEST RANKING POSTS IN HAN IMPERIAL COURT. HE SUCCESSFULLY PLOTS DONG ZHUO'S DOWNFALL USING DIAO CHANG IN VOLUME 8. HOWEVER, HE IS LATER KILLED BY REMNANTS OF DONG ZHUO'S ARMY (UNSHOWN IN MANGA).

WEN CHOU:
HE AND YANG LIANG ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS. IN VOLUME 18, HE IS AMBUSHED BY CAO CAO'S ARMY AND KILLED BY GUAN YU.

XIAHOU DUN:
TRUSTED GENERAL OF CAO CAO. HE LOST HIS LEFT EYE DURING A BATTLE AGAINST LU BU'S ARMY IN VOLUME 13.

XU CHU:
TRUSTED GENERAL OF CAO CAO. ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HE WAS RECRUITED BY CAO CAO WHO WAS IMPRESSED AFTER SEEING XU CHU'S DUEL WITH DIAN WEI.

XU SHU (SHAN FU):
THE TALENTED STRATEGIST WHO STUDIED UNDER SHUI JING. AFTER A BRIEF STINT OF SERVING LIU BEI, HE IS TRICKED INTO COMING TO XUCHANG AND SERVING CAO CAO (VOLUME 21).

XUN YU:
ONE OF CAO CAO'S MOST TALENTED ADVISORS.

YAN LIANG:
HE AND WEN CHOU ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS. IN VOLUME 17, HE WAS KILLED BY GUAN YU WHILE FIGHTING CAO CAO'S ARMY AT BAIMA.

YI JI:
AN ADVISOR TO LIU BIAO WHO WARNS LIU BEI ABOUT CAI MAO'S PLOT TO ASSASSINATE LIU BEI IN VOLUME 20.

YUAN SHAO:
OLDER BROTHER OF YUAN SHU AND THE GOVERNOR OF JIZHOU. AFTER MANY YEARS OF WARRING AGAINST CAO CAO FOR CONTROL OF NORTHERN CHINA, HE AND HIS FAMILY IS DEFEATED AND KILLED.

YUAN SHU:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF YUAN SHAO AND THE GOVERNOR OF NANYANG. AFTER RECEIVING THE IMPERIAL SEAL FROM SUN CE, HE DECLARES HIMSELF AS THE EMPEROR OF ZHONG DYNASTY. IN VOLUME 15, HE DIES OF THIRST AFTER BEING ON THE RUN FROM LIU BEI AND CAO CAO'S ARMIES.

ZHANG FEI YIDE:
A FIRECE, SHORT-TEMPERED WARRIOR WHO IS THE SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER OF LIU BEI AND GUAN YU.

ZHANG LIAO:
ONE OF CAO CAO'S TOP GENERALS. HE WAS FORMERLY LU BU'S SUBORDINATE BUT DEFECTED TO CAO CAO AFTER THE FORMER'S EXECUTION.

ZHANG XIU:
LORD OF WANCHENG WHO ATTEMPTED TO KILL CAO CAO DURING THE BATTLE OF WANCHENG IN VOLUME 12. AFTER YEARS OF CONFLICT AGAINST CAO CAO, HE FINALLY DECIDES TO DEFECT TO CAO CAO IN VOLUME 16.

ZHAO YUN ZILONG:
A FORMER RETAINER TO YUAN SHAO WHO LATER DEFECTED TO SERVE GONGSUN ZAN. AFTER GONGSUN ZAN'S DEATH, HE LATER MEETS UP WITH LIU BEI AND FINALLY BECOMES HIS RETAINER.

ZHOU CANG:
FORMERLY A YELLOW TURBAN, HE MEETS GUAN YU IN VOLUME 18 AND BECOMES HIS SUBORDINATE.

ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING:
MASTERFUL STRATEGIST AND FORMER STUDENT OF SHUI JING. IN VOLUME 21, HE YIELDS TO LIU BEI'S PERSISTENCE AND DECIDES TO BECOME HIS SUBJECT.

# SANGOKUSHI'S CAST OF CHARACTERS
## PART 2: OTHER MINOR CHARACTERS

CAI MAO:
GENERAL SERVING UNDER LIU BIAO AND UNCLE OF LIU CONG. IN VOLUME 20, BECAUSE LIU BEI ADVISES LIU BIAO TO NAME LIU QI AS THE HEIR OF JINGZHOU INSTEAD OF LIU CONG, CAI MAO ATTEMPTS TO ASSASSINATE LIU BEI.

CAO REN:
GENERAL SERVING UNDER CAO CAO.

CAO HONG:
GENERAL AND COUSIN TO CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 6, HE SAVES CAO CAO FROM CERTAIN DEATH.

CAO SONG:
CAO CAO'S FATHER AND A FORMER GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS KILLED BY TAO QIAN'S ESCORT AND FORMER YELLOW TURBAN, ZHANG KAI.

DING YUAN:
GOVERNOR OF BINGZHOU AND LU BU'S FOSTER-FATHER. HE OBJECTED TO DONG ZHUO'S SCHEME TO PLACE PRINCE CHENLIU AS THE EMPEROR OF HAN, EARNING DONG ZHUO'S WRATH. IN VOLUME 4, HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS FOSTER-SON, LU BU, WHO THEN DEFECTS TO SERVE DONG ZHUO.

EMPRESS DOWAGER DONG:
MOTHER TO THE FORMER EMPEROR LING AND GRANDMOTHER TO EMPEROR XIAN. IN VOLUME 3, EMPRESS HE ORDERS FOR HER DEATH TO SECURE HER SON LIU BIAN'S THRONE AS THE NEXT EMPEROR OF HAN.

GAO SHUN:
ONE OF LU BU'S TRUSTED GENERALS. HE IS EXECUTED ALONG WITH HIS LORD IN VOLUME 14.

GUO SI:
A GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED DONG ZHUO. AFTER DONG ZHUO'S DEATH, HE AND LI JUE TOOK CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND DID AS THEY PLEASED UNTIL THE EMPEROR RUNS TO CAO CAO FOR PROTECTION.

HE JIN:
OLDER BROTHER OF EMPRESS HE. ORIGINALLY A SIMPLE BUTCHER, HE BECAME A GENERAL WHEN HIS YOUNGER SISTER BECAME EMPEROR LING'S CONSORT. IN VOLUME 3, HE ATTEMPTS TO ELIMINATE THE TEN ATTENDANTS, ONLY TO BE DISSUADED FROM DOING SO BY HIS YOUNGER SISTER. HE IS LATER KILLED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS.

HOU CHENG:
ONE OF LU BU'S GENERALS. IN VOLUME 14, HE, ALONG WITH GENERALS WEI XU AND SONG XIAN, BETRAYS LU BU AND DEFECTS TO CAO CAO'S SIDE.

HUA XIONG:
FAMED GENERAL SERVING UNDER DONG ZHUO. IN VOLUME 5, HE DEFEATS SUN JIAN'S ARMY BUT IS LATER KILLED BY GUAN YU.

JI PING:
IMPERIAL PHYSICIAN OF HAN WHO, WITH DONG CHENG, PLOTS TO POISON CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 17, CAO CAO DISCOVERS THEIR PLOT AND EXECUTES HIM.

JIANG QIN:
FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH ZHOU TAI, BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR SUN CE'S FATHER, SUN JIAN.

LADY FUYOU:
FICTIONAL CHARACTER CREATED BY MITSUTERU YOKOYAMA AND LIU BEI'S FIRST LOVE. ZHANG FEI FORMERLY SERVED HER FAMILY, WHO WERE MASSCRED BY THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELS.

LADY MI:
LIU BEI'S FIRST WIFE.

LI JUE:
A GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED DONG ZHUO. AFTER DONG ZHUO'S DEATH, HE AND GUO SI TOOK CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND DID AS THEY PLEASED UNTIL THE EMPEROR RUNS TO CAO CAO FOR PROTECTION.

LI DIAN:
SCHOLARLY GENERAL UNDER THE SERVICE OF CAO CAO.

LIU BIAN:
THE SON OF EMPRESS HE AND BRIEFLY THE EMPEROR OF HAN AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER, EMPEROR LING. IN VOLUME 4, HE WAS DEPOSED BY DONG ZHUO AND LATER KILLED ALONG WITH HIS MOTHER BY LI RU.

LIU FENG:
LIU BEI'S ADOPTED SON. ORIGINALLY THE NEPHEW OF LIU MI, HE WAS ADOPTED BY LIU BEI WHO TOOK A LIKING TO HIM IN VOLUME 21.

LIU QI:
ELDEST SON OF LIU BIAO AND THE OLDER BROTHER OF LIU CONG.

MI ZHU:
ONE OF LIU BEI'S ADVISORS.

SUN QIAN:
ADVISOR/EMISSARY SERVING LIU BEI. (HIS ROLE IS MUCH SMALLER IN SANGOKUSHI COMPARED TO THE ORIGINAL NOVEL.)

YU JIN:
GENERAL SERVING CAO CAO. (IN RECORDS OF THE THRE KINGDOMS, WRITTEN BY CHEN SHOU, YU JIN IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE FIVE TOP GENERALS FOR WEI.)

LU ZHI:
LIU BEI'S FORMER TEACHER AND THE PALACE COMMANDER WHO WAS PLACED IN CHARGE OF LEADING THE HAN ARMY AGAINST THE YELLOW TURBANS. HE WAS LATER DEMOTED FOR FAILING TO BRIBE ONE OF THE IMPERIAL MESSENGERS.

ZHANG BAO:
ZHANG JIAO'S YOUNGER BROTHER AND THE YELLOW TURBAN'S GENERAL OF THE LAND. HE WAS KILLED BY LIU BEI IN VOLUME 2.

ZHANG JIAO:
LEADER OF THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELLION. HE PASSED AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 3.

ZHANG ZHAO/ZHANG HONG:
THE TWO GENIUSES OF JIANGDONG, ALSO KNOWN AS THE "TWO ZHANGS." AFTER SUN CE'S ADMANT INSISTENCE, THEY DECIDE TO SERVE HIM AND HELP HIS CAMPAIGN TO CONQUER JIANGNAN AND JIANGDONG.



ZHOU TAI:
FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH JIANG QIN BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR HIS FATHER, SUN JIAN.

SANGOKUSHI
(ROMANCE OF THE
THREE KINGDOMS)

# 三国志

# VOLUME 24
# KONGMING'S PERSUASION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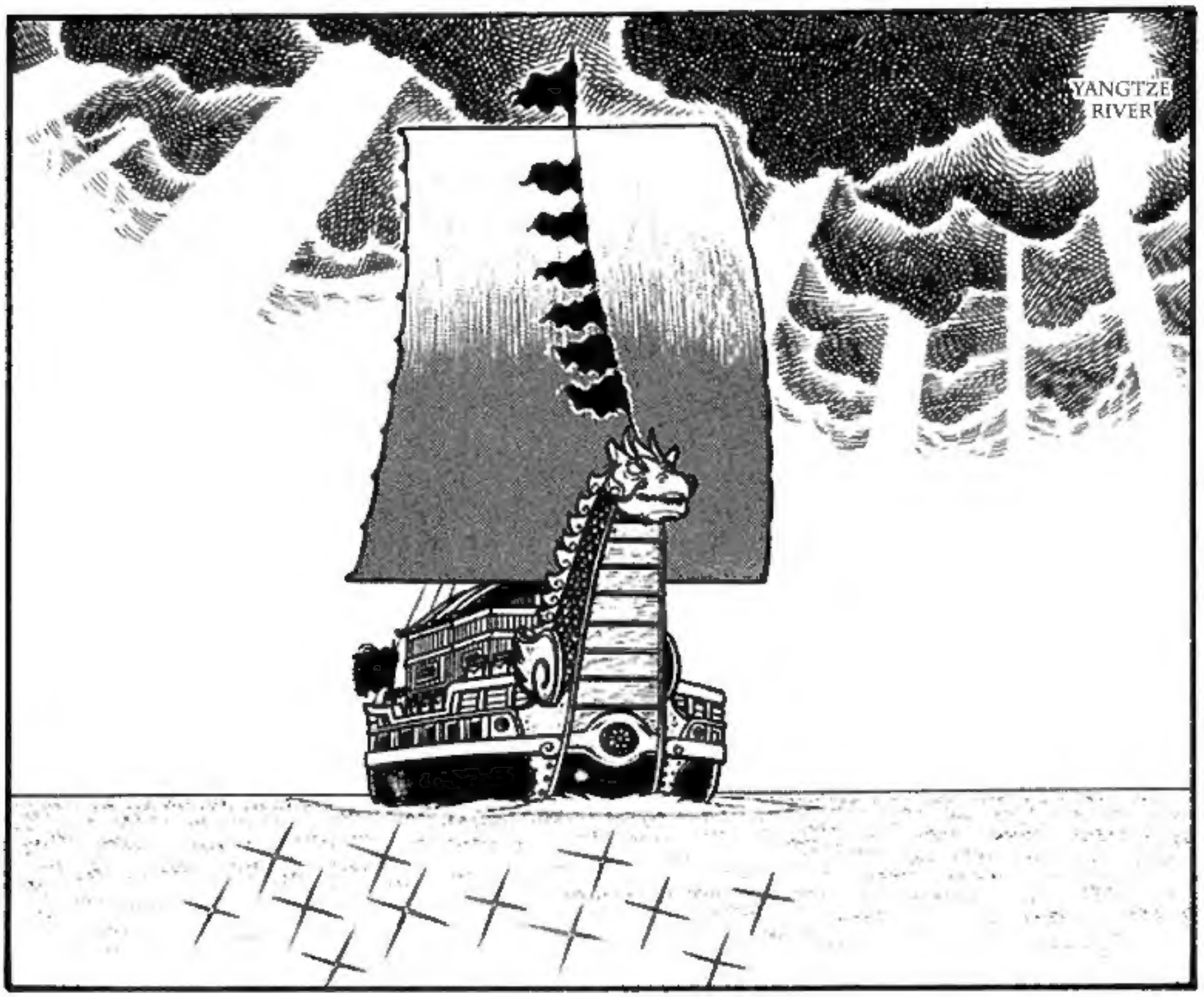
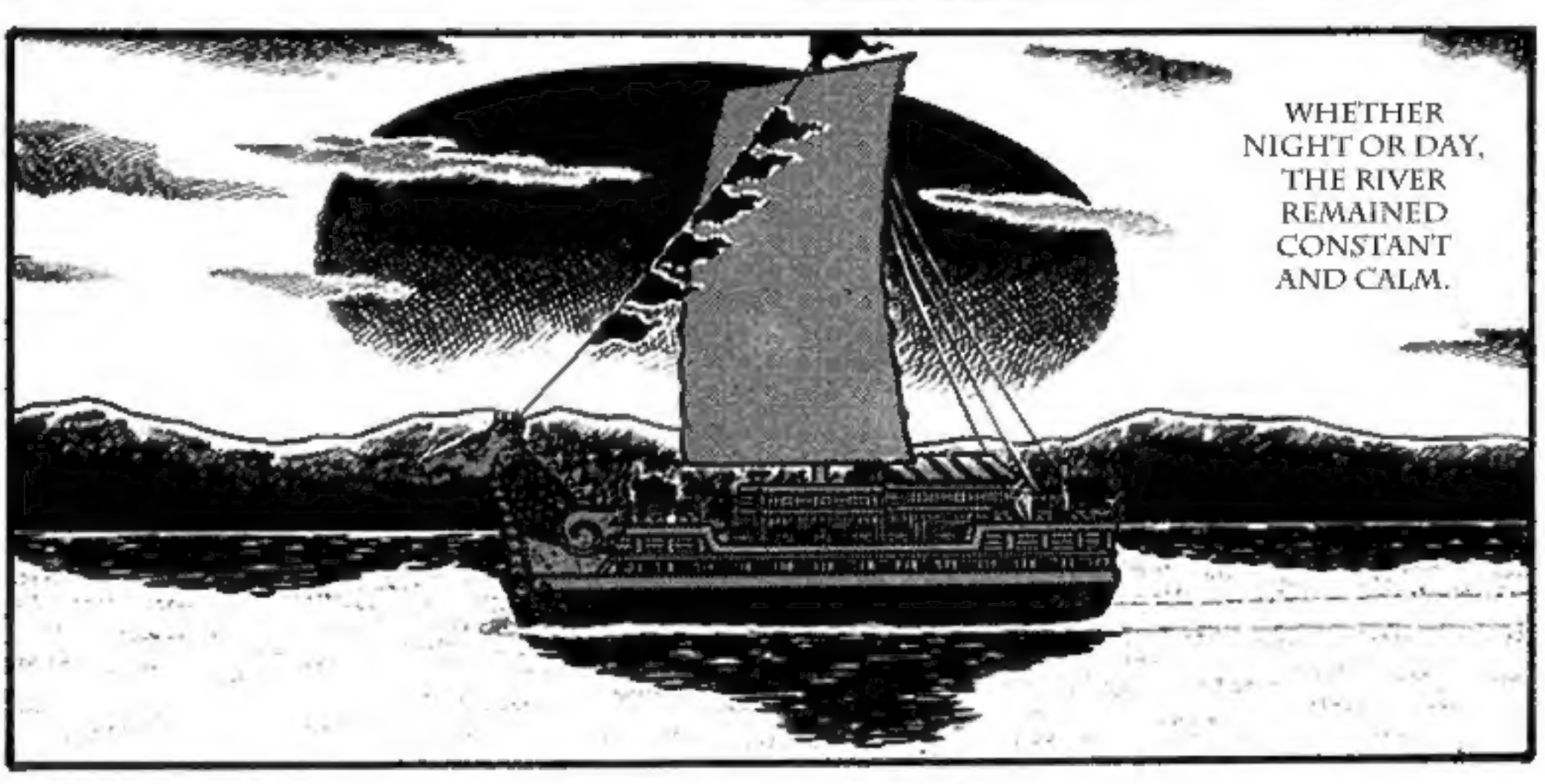
（月刊『コミックトム』掲載）

# BATTLE OF WORDS



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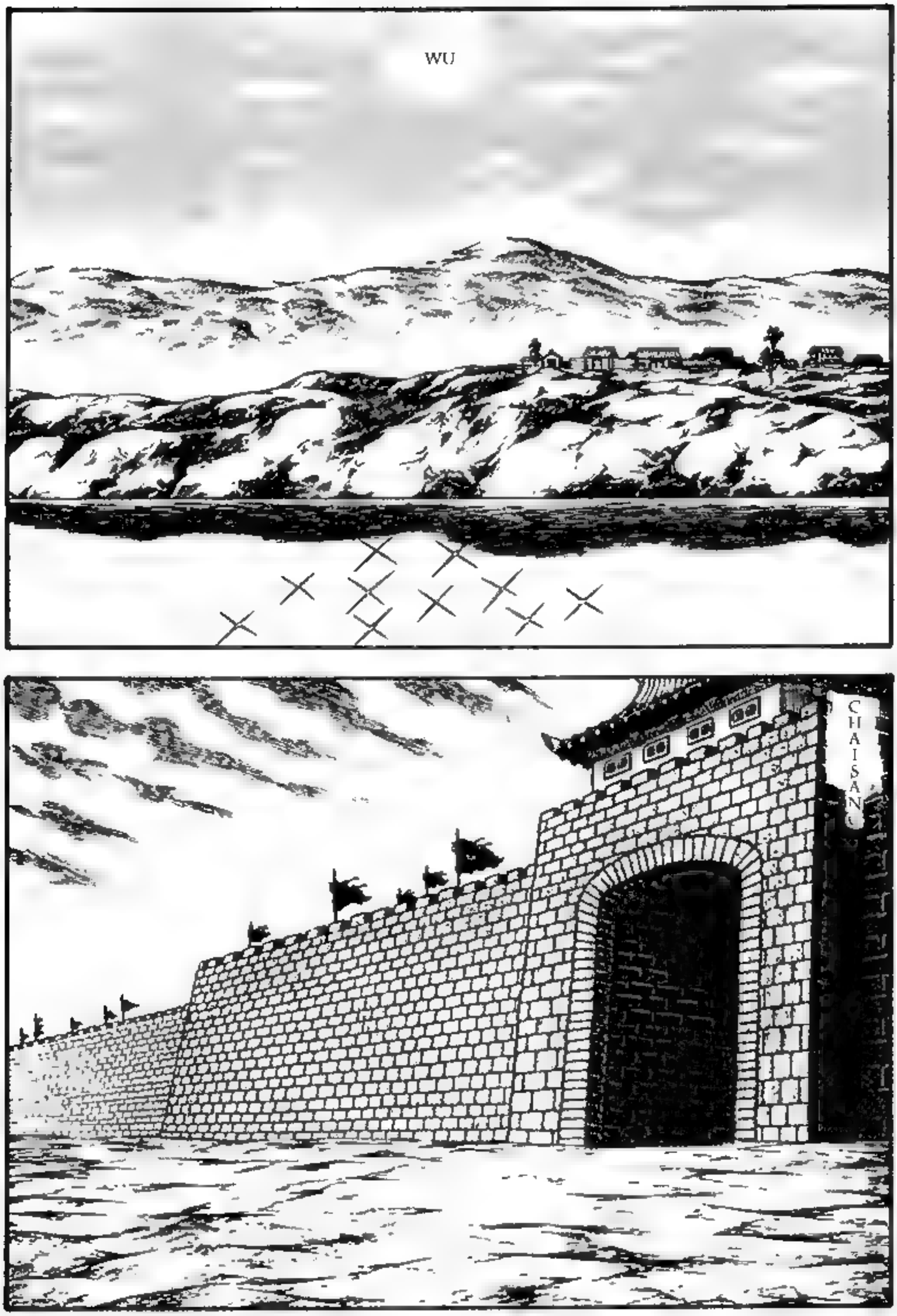
THOUGH WEAKENED AS OF LATE, LIU BEI IS STILL A SIGNIFICANT FIGURE. FOR HIM TO SEND HIS MILITARY ADVISOR ALONE INTO FOREIGN LANDS WITHOUT ANY ESCORTS OR GUARDS MEANS THAT THEY'RE BOTH PREPARED TO RISK THEIR LIVES...


WU
CHAISAN

AH, YOU'VE COME AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME, LU SU.

I HAVE RETURNED, MY LORD.

NOT QUITE...

SO THEN, WERE YOU ABLE TO ASCERTAIN THE STATUS OF LIU BEI'S FORCES?

?

?

THAT'S NOT QUITE IT EITHER. BUT I SHALL TELL YOU THE DETAILS A LITTLE LATER IN PRIVATE.

THEN ARE YOU SAYING YOU'VE GONE AND COME BACK ALL THE WAY FROM JINGZHOU WITHOUT A SINGLE THING TO REPORT?

THEN LET US CONTINUE THE DEBATE, GENTLEMEN.

ALRIGHT.

LU SU, WE'VE RECENTLY RECEIVED A LETTER FROM CAO CAO.

HMM...

THIS IS THAT LETTER.

SUBMIT TO ME AND WE SHALL SHARE THE SPOILS OF WAR WHEN WE DESTROY LIU BEI. REFUSE, AND MY MILLION-MAN STRONG ARMY SHALL LAY WASTE TO WU. THE CHOICE IS YOURS, I SUGGEST YOU RESPOND QUICKLY.

YES, AND SO WE'VE BEEN DISCUSSING HOW BEST TO RESPOND SINCE EARLY MORNING.

QUITE THE... AGGRESSIVE OFFER, ISN'T IT?

CAO CAO'S FORCES ARE A MILLION-STRONG WHILE WE ARE ONLY A FEW TENS OF THOUSANDS STRONG. HOW COULD WE POSSIBLY STAND UP TO HIM?

THAT'S RIGHT. ALMOST ALL US MEMBERS OF THE COURT ARE AGAINST THE IDEA OF WAR.

AND WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE MAJORITY OPINION?

THE MEN ARE LEANING TO THE VIEW THAT WE MUST AVOID BATTLE.

I OPPOSE TO SUBMITTING! CAO CAO'S SO-CALLED MILLION MAN ARMY ARE ONLY SEASONED WARRIORS ON LAND.

HUMILIATING AS IT MAY BE, THERE IS NO OTHER RATIONAL CHOICE THAN TO SUBMIT AND SECRETLY BUILD UP OUR FORCES FOR NOW.

TRUE, CAO CAO'S FORCES USED TO LACK A SIGNIFICANT NAVAL FORCE. BUT HAVE YOU MEN FORGOTTEN HE NOW HAS CONTROL OF JINGZHOU'S NAVY?

THAT'S RIGHT! THE BATTLE SHALL BE DECIDED BY OUR NAVAL FORCES!

EVEN IF WE WERE TO EMERGE VICTORIOUS, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT WE WOULD LOSE HALF OUR ARMY! JUST HOW LONG DO YOU THINK IT WOULD TAKE OUR CRIPPLED WU TO RECOVER THEN? IT CERTAINLY WON'T BE A MATTER OF 3 OR 4 YEARS!

IT'S BEEN GOING BACK AND FORTH LIKE THIS ALL DAY LONG.

YES, GOOD IDEA.

WHY DON'T WE TAKE A BRIEF BREAK THEN?

LET US TAKE A BREAK FOR THE DAY, GENTLEMEN.

WHEW, MY HEAD HURTS FROM LISTENING TO ALL THAT BICKERING.

MINE?

WHAT ARE YOUR PERSONAL FEELINGS ON THIS MATTER, LU SU?

CAO CAO SHALL DESIGNATE MY LORD TO SOME HUMBLE FIEF WHERE SIR SHALL HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH A SINGLE CARRIAGE, A FEW HORSES, AND MAYBE 10 SERVANTS.

PLEASE CONSIDER FOR A MOMENT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF MY LORD SURRENDERED.

HOWEVER, THE SAME DOES NOT APPLY FOR US RETAINERS. WE CAN CHOOSE TO SERVE OTHER MASTERS AND CONTINUE ON WITH OUR LIVES JUST AS BEFORE. AND IF THINGS WERE TO GO WELL, IT IS EVEN POSSIBLE FOR US TO BE MADE GOVERNOR ONE DAY.

HMM...

THUS, I BELIEVE THOSE WHO ADVOCATE SURRENDER ARE ONLY INTERESTED IN THEIR OWN WELL-BEING AND DO NOT REALLY CARE FOR THE FUTURE OF WU.

ZHUGE JIN'S YOUNGER BROTHER, ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING.

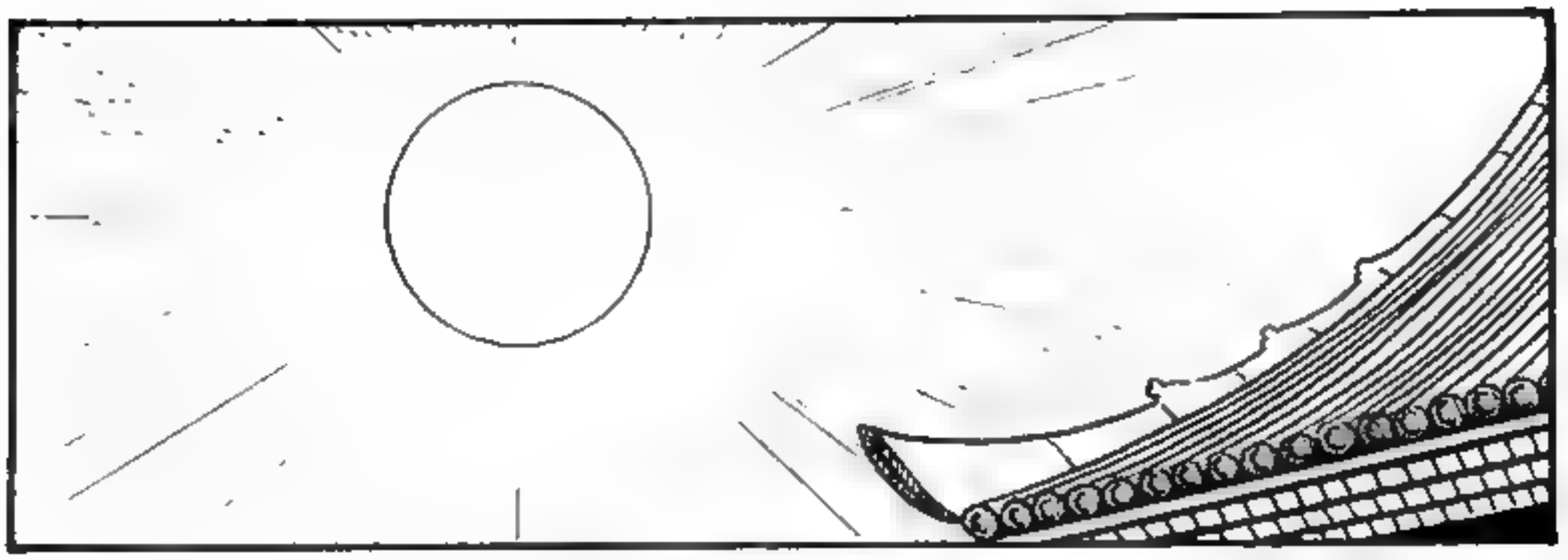
AND WHO MIGHT THAT BE?

THERE HAPPENS TO BE A CERTAIN MAN I BROUGHT OVER ON MY TRIP TO JIANGXIA. IT WOULD BE BEST IF MY LORD CONSULTED HIM ON THIS MATTER AS WELL.

KONG-MING!?

I SHALL TELL KONGMING THAT THEN.

EXCELLENT. IT IS TOO LATE TO SEE HIM TODAY BUT I SHALL MEET WITH HIM TOMORROW.



THIS WAY, PLEASE.

THERE'S NO DOUBT HIS PURPOSE IS TO MAKE US FIGHT WITH CAO CAO FOR LIU BEI'S BENEFIT. I MUST NOT LET HIM ENDANGER WU...

SO HE'S THE FAMOUS KONGMING, IS HE...

A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU ALL. I AM ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING

THESE GENTLEMEN BEFORE YOU ARE WU'S CIVIL MINISTERS AND MILITARY OFFICERS.

AS OUR GUEST, PLEASE TAKE THE SEAT OF HONOUR.

HEARING THAT THE ESTEEMED KONGMING CAME ALL THE WAY TO WU, WE HAVE GATHERED HERE, HOPING THAT YOU WILL LEND US YOUR WISDOM.

AND THAT IS WHY YOU SEEM TO BE FAILING TO LIVE UP TO LIU BEI'S EXPECTATIONS.

BUT THERE IS SOMETHING THAT I HAVE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT, IF YOU DON'T MIND ME ASKING.

IT IS SAID THAT LIU BEI PERSONALLY VISITED YOU THREE TIMES IN ORDER TO CONVINCE YOU TO SERVE HIM. NOT ONLY THAT, UPON OBTAINING YOUR SERVICES, HE REPORTEDLY REMARKED HE WAS HAPPY AS A FISH THAT OBTAINED WATER.

WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU MEAN?

BUT LIU BEI WAS CERTAINLY A TALENTED MAN EVEN BEFORE HE MET YOU, WAS HE NOT? IF YOU WERE INDEED THE GENIUS OF HIS DREAMS, IT WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE TO SAY THAT LIU BEI WAS NOT A FISH THAT HAD OBTAINED WATER, BUT A TIGER THAT HAD OBTAINED WINGS.

SURELY THE REST OF THE WORLD THOUGHT THE SAME. WE EXPECTED THAT LIU BEI WOULD SOON RESTORE HAN AND END CAO CAO'S TYRANNY... BUT ALAS, WHAT WAS THE ACTUAL OUTCOME...?

I DARE SAY YOU ARE NO TRUE GENIUS IF YOU ALLOWED SUCH A DISASTER TO BEFALL YOUR LORD.

JINGZHOU NOW LIES IN CAO CAO'S HANDS AND LIU BEI, AFTER FLEEING FROM CAO CAO'S ARMY, HAS HOLED HIMSELF UP IN JIANGXIA. A MOST PITIFUL STATE, INDEED.

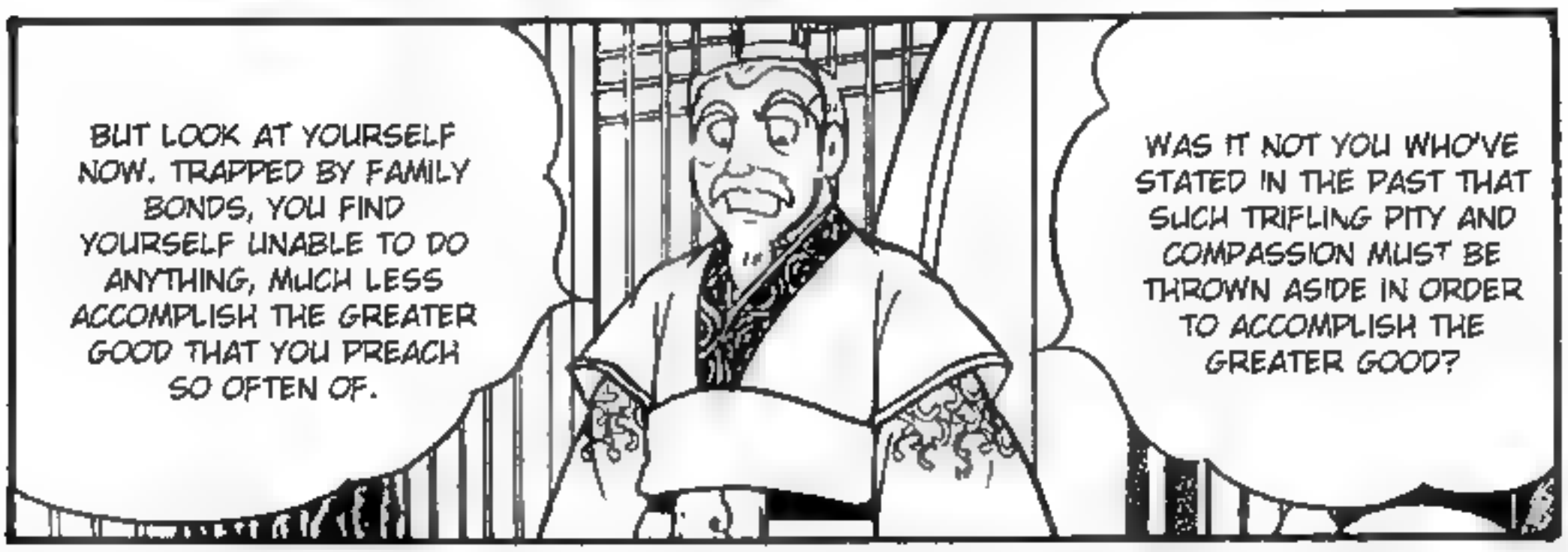
ALLOW ME TO ANSWER YOUR DOUBTS THEN.

*THESE MEN BEFORE ME ARE WU'S HIGH RANKING MINISTERS. IF I BECOME MIRED IN DEBATE WITH THEM, I SHALL NEVER BE ABLE TO SWAY SUN QUAN.*

WELL, ISN'T THAT QUITE STRANGE?

AND WHY IS THAT?

MY LORD, BEING HUMANE AND VIRTUOUS, COULD NOT BRING HIMSELF TO STEAL THE LANDS OF A MEMBER OF HIS OWN FAMILY.
IF MY LORD TRULY WISHED TO TAKE OVER JINGZHOU, IT WOULD HAVE ONLY BEEN TOO EASY. HOWEVER, LIU BIAO AND LIU BEI ARE OF THE SAME FAMILY.


BUT LOOK AT YOURSELF NOW. TRAPPED BY FAMILY BONDS, YOU FIND YOURSELF UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING, MUCH LESS ACCOMPLISH THE GREATER GOOD THAT YOU PREACH SO OFTEN OF.
WAS IT NOT YOU WHO'VE STATED IN THE PAST THAT SUCH TRIFLING PITY AND COMPASSION MUST BE THROWN ASIDE IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THE GREATER GOOD?

BUT OF COURSE, I WOULD NOT EXPECT THE LONG FLIGHTS OF CRANES TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY COMMON BIRDS.

HAHAHA! IS THAT HOW IT SEEMS TO YOUR EYES?

NOT ONLY THAT, HIS ONLY HOLDING, XINYE, WAS A SMALL RUSTIC TOWN WITH INADEQUATE FOOD AND SUPPLIES. IN ESSENCE, HE WAS A SICK PATIENT IN GRAVE CONDITION LIKE IN THE ANALOGY I GAVE JUST NOW.

AFTER SUFFERING DEFEAT AT RUNAN, MY LORD WENT TO SEEK AID FROM LIU BIAO. AT THAT TIME, MY LORD HAD LESS THAN A THOUSAND SOLDIERS AND ONLY 3 GENERALS: GUAN YU, ZHANG FEI, AND ZHAO ZILONG.

AS HIS MILITARY ADVISOR, IT WAS ONLY RATIONAL FOR ME TO ADVISE MY LORD TO FLEE AND WAIT FOR A CHANCE TO RECOVER.

FIGHTING HEAD-ON AGAINST CAO CAO IN SUCH A WEAKENED STATE WOULD ONLY BE FOOLISHLY RUSHING TOWARDS DEATH.

YET EVEN WHILE IN SUCH A WEAKENED STATE, WE STILL MANAGED TO BURN XIAHOU DUN'S ARMY AT BOWANG AND DROWN CAO REN'S ARMY IN THE WHITE RIVER.

TO GIVE AN ANALOGY, WHEN CONFRONTED WITH A PATIENT IN GRAVE CONDITION, A DOCTOR MUST FIRST ADMINISTER MILD, SOOTHING DRUGS AND FEED HIM RICE PORRIDGE SO THAT HIS INTERNAL ORGANS MAY RETURN TO HARMONY. ONLY AFTER THEN WILL THE DOCTOR BEGIN TO FEED HIM MEAT AND ADMINISTER STRONGER AND MORE POTENT DRUGS.

HAD THE DOCTOR STARTED OFF WITH POTENT DRUGS WITHOUT CONSIDERING THE FRAIL CONDITION OF HIS PATIENT, THE ILLNESS SHALL ONLY GROW MORE SEVERE.

FOR YOU SEE, RESTORING A DYNASTY REQUIRES A LONG TERM MASTER PLAN, WHICH CANNOT POSSIBLY BE UNDERSTOOD BY NARROW-MINDED RHETORICIANS WHO EXCEL IN ARMCHAIR DEBATES ONLY TO COME UP SHORT WHEN CONFRONTING A REAL CRISIS!

MIGHT I REMIND YOU THAT XIANG YU OF CHU WON MANY VICTORIES AGAINST THE GREAT FOUNDER OF HAN, BUT WAS ULTIMATELY DEFEATED AFTER THE DECISIVE BATTLE OF GAIXIA. MEANWHILE, HAN XIN, THE GENERAL RESPONSIBLE FOR DEFEATING XIANG YU, HAD NEVER WON A SINGLE BATTLE PRIOR TO GAIXIA.

ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?

MN...

YES, I HAVE A QUESTION. CAO CAO'S FORCES ARE A MILLION-STRONG AND IT WOULD SEEM ONLY TOO EASY FOR HIM TO CONQUER ALL OF CHINA. JUST WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DEAL WITH HIS ARMY?

WELL, ISN'T THAT QUITE STRANGE?

HA HA HA

THOUGH HE BOASTS A MILLION, THE ACTUAL NUMBER IS CLOSER TO 800,000, WHICH HAS ONLY BEEN MADE POSSIBLE FROM TAKING IN YUAN SHAO'S SWARMS AND LIU BIAO'S MOBS. SUCH AN ILL-ORGANIZED ARMY IS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

NOT ONLY HAS THAT SO-CALLED "ILL-ORGANIZED ARMY" HAS BEATEN AND DRIVEN YOUR LORD ALL THE WAY TO JIANGXIA, BUT YOU ARE NOW HERE, DESPERATE FOR ANY SCRAP OF SUPPORT. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU'RE MUCH MORE SCARED THAN YOU LET ON...

I REMIND YOU AGAIN THAT MY LORD ONLY HAS A FEW THOUSAND TROOPS TO FIGHT AGAINST CAO CAO'S MILLION VIOLENT BRUTES. ILL-ORGANIZED THEY MAY BE, FIGHTING THEM HEAD ON WOULD ONLY LEAD TO OUR DESTRUCTION. THUS, WE HAVE RETREATED TO JIANGXIA FOR THE TIME BEING.

I CANNOT DISAGREE ANY MORE.

IF THERE IS ANYONE AFRAID OF CAO CAO HERE, IT IS MOST CERTAINLY NOT MY LORD NOR I, BUT YOU GENTLEMEN!

WU, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS A STRONG ARMY, PLENTY OF GRAIN STOCKPILES, AND EVEN THE GREAT YANGTZE RIVER AS A NATURAL BARRIER. YET DESPITE HAVING THE RESOURCES AND MANPOWER TO RESIST CAO CAO, YOU ADVISE YOUR LORD TO SURRENDER?

KONG-MING!

.....

IT APPEARS THAT YOU THINK OF THOSE TWO AS MERELY GOOD RHETORICIANS AND FAIL TO ACKNOWELDGE THEIR DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENTS.

HAVE YOU COME TO THESE SOUTHERN LANDS TO TOY AROUND WITH US AS SU QIN AND ZHANG YI DID IN ANCIENT TIMES!?*

SU QIN BORE THE PRIME MINISTER'S SEAL OF THE 6 KINGDOMS IN THE VERTICAL ALLIANCE WHILE ZHANG YI TWICE SERVED AS THE CHIEF MINISTER OF QIN. BOTH MEN POSSESSED EXCEPTIONAL TALENTS IN STRENGTHENING THEIR GOVERNMENTS AND WERE NO COWARDS WHO WOULD BOW DOWN BEFORE THE SWORD.

NGH...

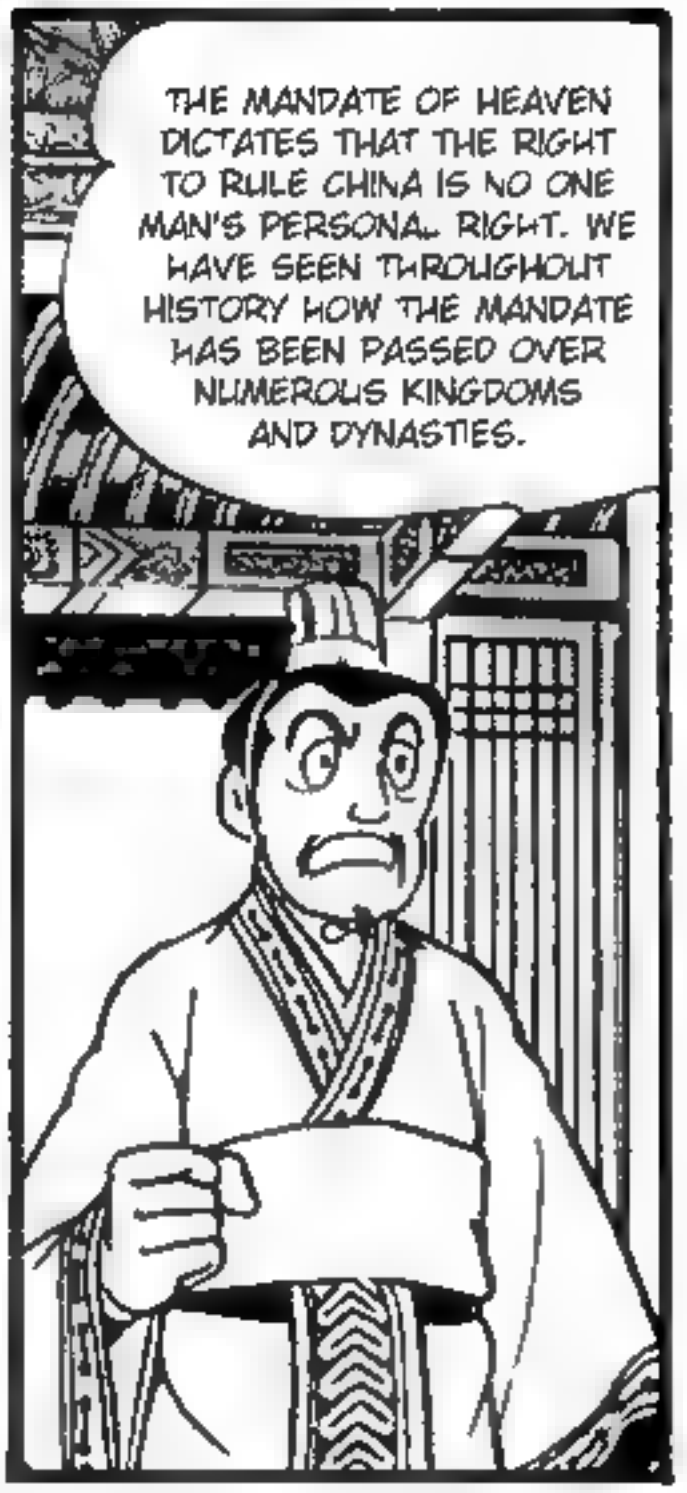
ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU GENTLEMEN HAVE BEEN SCARED OUT OF YOUR WITS BY A SINGLE LETTER FROM CAO CAO, FULL OF NOTHING BUT EMPTY THREATS! AND YET YOU DARE MOCK THE LIKES OF SU QIN AND ZHANG YI!?

*SU QIN AND ZHANG YI WERE PROMINENT POLITICIANS DURING THE WARRING STATES PERIOD. SU QIN ADVOCATED FOR A VERTICAL ALLIANCE, AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN A GROUP OF STATES FROM NORTH TO SOUTH IN ORDER TO FIGHT AGAINST QIN. WHILE THE LATTER ADVOCATED FOR A HORIZONTAL ALLIANCE, AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN A GROUP OF STATES FROM EAST TO WEST THAT WOULD MAKE PEACE WITH QIN.

A TRAITOR TO HAN, OF COURSE!

WHAT IS YOUR OPINION ON CAO CAO?

EMPEROR YAO HANDED DOWN THE THRONE TO SHUN, WHO HANDED IT DOWN TO YU, WHO BEGAN THE XIA DYNASTY. AFTER 400 YEARS, THE XIA BECAME CORRUPT AND THE HEAVENS TOOK THE MANDATE AWAY FROM KING JIE AND CONFERRED IT UPON SHANG TANG, WHO ESTABLISHED THE SHANG DYNASTY. AND WHEN IT WAS THE SHANG WHO BECAME CORRUPT, THE SAME HAPPENED AGAIN AS KING WU OVERTHREW KING ZHOU TO ESTABLISH THE ZHOU DYNASTY. EVEN OUR GLORIOUS HAN DYNASTY CAME TO POWER BY DESTROYING THE QIN DYNASTY.


THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN DICTATES THAT THE RIGHT TO RULE CHINA IS NO ONE MAN'S PERSONAL RIGHT. WE HAVE SEEN THROUGHOUT HISTORY HOW THE MANDATE HAS BEEN PASSED OVER NUMEROUS KINGDOMS AND DYNASTIES.

CAO CAO CURRENTLY CONTROLS TWO-THIRDS OF CHINA AND THE PEOPLE ARE BEGINNING TO SUPPORT HIM. IF YOU CALL HIM A TRAITOR, THEN BY YOUR LOGIC, SO WOULD THE GREAT KING TANG OF SHANG AND KING WU OF ZHOU!

DO YOU KNOW NEITHER FATHER NOR LORD!? HOW CAN YOU CALL YOURSELF HUMAN WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING LOYALTY!?

SILENCE!

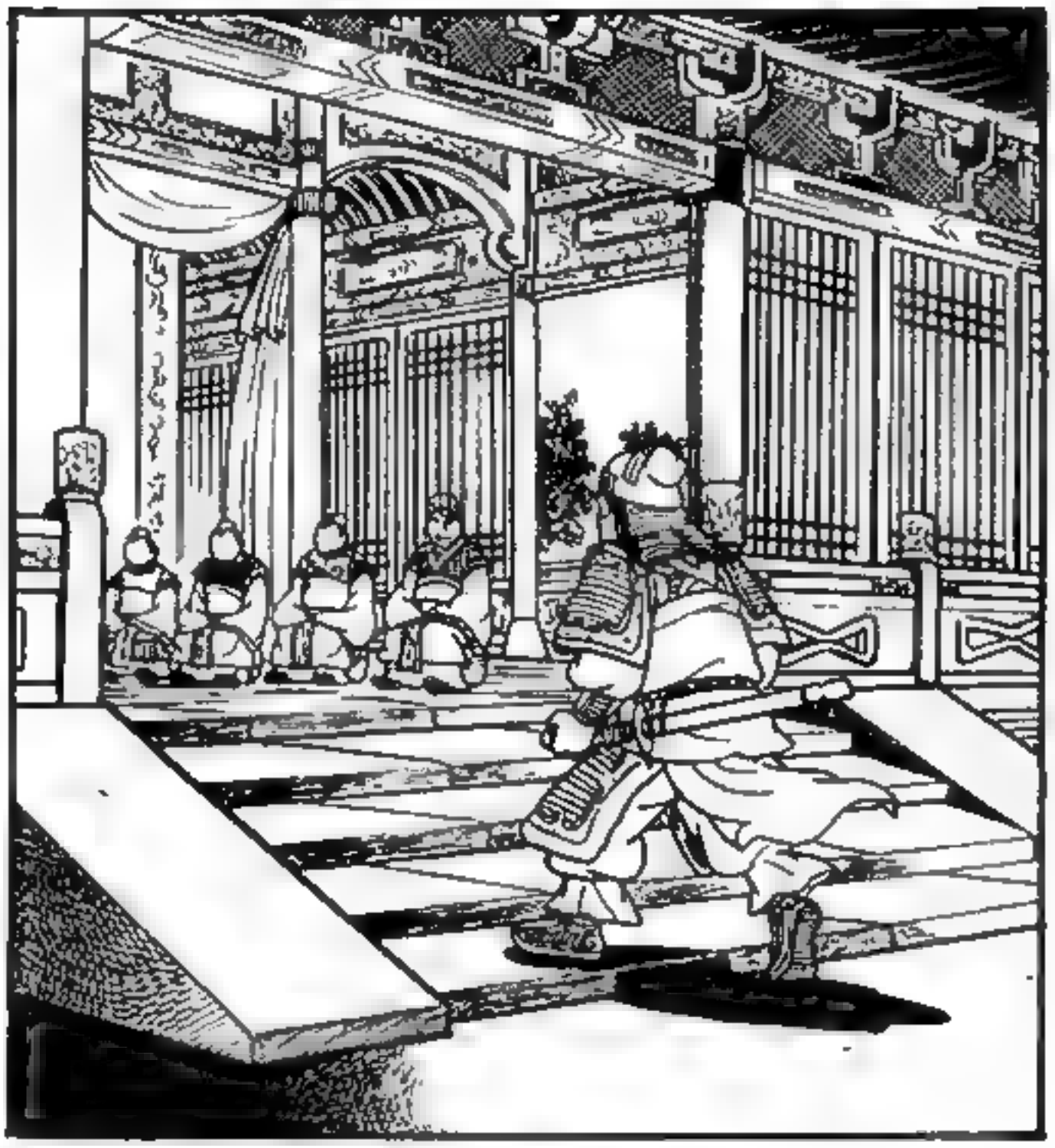
DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT IS AN ACCEPTABLE ACTION?

CAO CAO AND HIS ANCESTORS HAVE ENJOYED THE BOUNTY OF HAN WHEN IT WAS STRONG, YET NOW THAT IT HAS WEAKENED, HE HARBORS TREACHEROUS IDEAS OF REBELLION AND INTENDS TO CONQUER IT PURELY FOR HIS OWN SELFISH GAINS.

.....

LET ME ASK YOU GENTLEMEN A QUESTION. WOULD YOU SO WILLINGLY ABANDON YOUR MASTER IF HE WERE TO GROW WEAK, JUST AS CAO CAO DID?

JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU GENTLEMEN ARE DOING!?



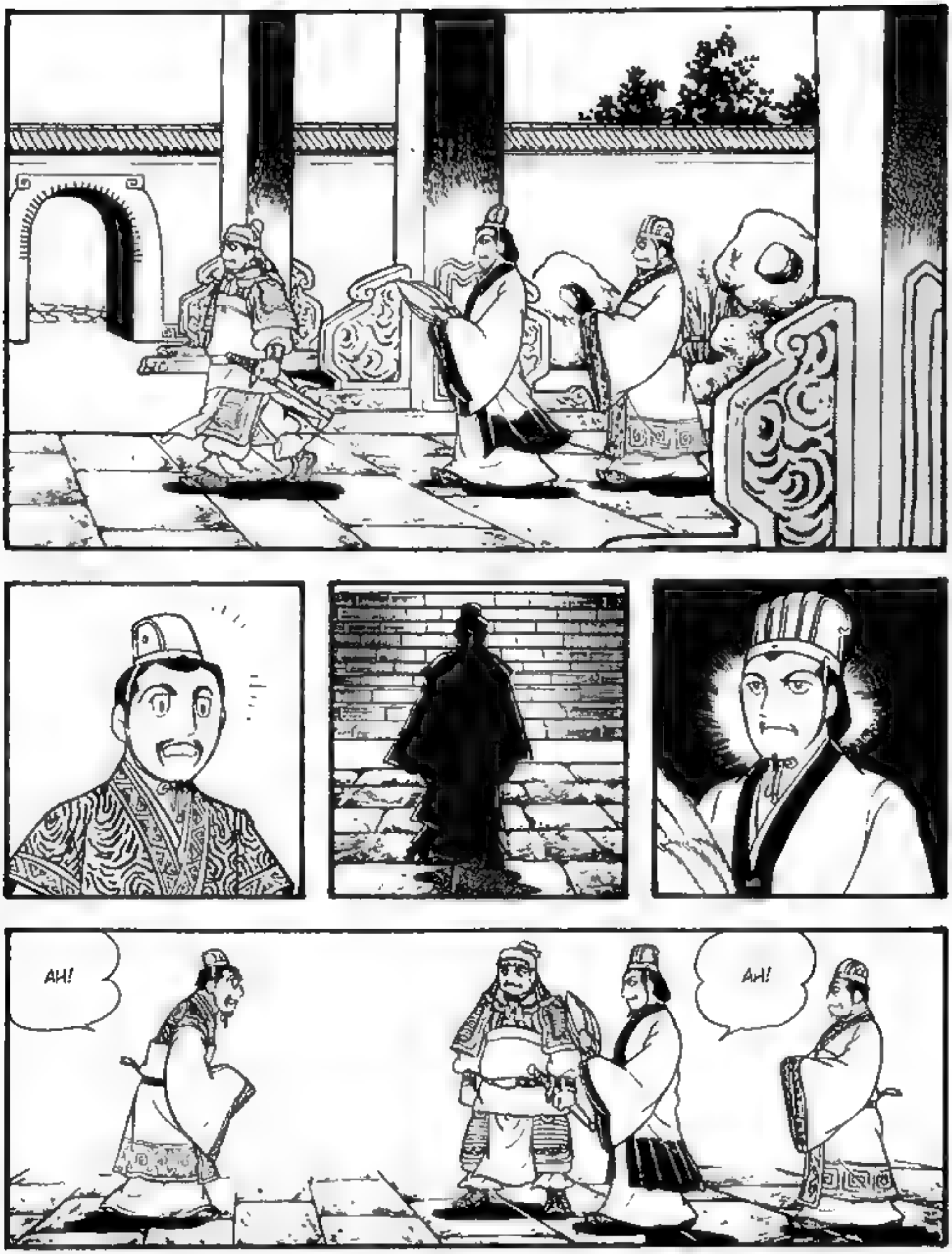
KONGMING HERE IS A GENIUS OF GENIUSES! DO YOU REALLY INTEND TO WASTE HIS TIME WITH THESE FOOLISH QUESTIONS AND PETTY ARGUMENTS!?

MY LORD SUN QUAN HAS BEEN ANXIOUS TO MEET YOU. WHY NOT LEND HIM YOUR VALUABLE ADVICE THAN WASTING IT ON THESE NARROW-MINDED MEN?

NO, NOT AT ALL.
I APOLOGIZE FOR THESE MEN WASTING YOUR PRECIOUS TIME.

AND THUS THE BATTLE OF WORDS ENDED IN KONGMING'S FAVOUR IN ORDER TO CONVINCE WU, HE COULD NOT AFFORD TO LET A SINGLE ARGUMENT OR OBJECTION GET THE BETTER OF HIM

# CAT'S PAW



THE SAME TO YOU, BROTHER JIN.

I CAN HARDLY RECOGNIZE YOU!

YES, I'VE COME HERE UNDER MY LORD'S ORDERS.

MY LITTLE BROTHER LIANG, IS THAT REALLY YOU?

FORGIVE ME BROTHER, BUT I'M HERE ON URGENT DIPLOMATIC MATTERS SO WE'LL HAVE TO DELAY CATCHING UP AT THE MOMENT.

WHY HAVEN'T YOU VISITED MY HOME YET IF YOU'RE HERE IN WU?

EXCUSE ME THEN.

YES.

YES, OF COURSE. LET US CHAT ONCE YOU'RE DONE WITH YOUR BUSINESS.

MY LORD IS WAITING FOR YOU UP AHEAD.

NO, THE PLEASURE IS ALL MINE.

A PLEASURE TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE. I AM ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING.

COME INSIDE.

PLEASE, TAKE A SEAT RIGHT NEXT TO ME.

SUCH A MAN IS ONE TO BE INCITED BUT NOT TO BE PERSUADED. IT WOULD BE BEST TO STIR UP HIS EMOTIONS A LITTLE TO BEGIN WITH...
YES, HE LOOKS EVERY BIT AS DIGNIFIED AS I THOUGHT HE WOULD BE... BUT HE SEEMS A LITTLE TEMPERAMENTAL, MAYBE EVEN TOO HEADSTRONG FOR HIS OWN GOOD...

YES, THANK YOU.

LET US ENJOY SOME TEA AS WE CONVERSE.

YES, BUT WITH ONLY A FEW THOUSAND SOLDIERS AND BARELY FIVE GENERALS, THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO TO DEFEND XINYE, WHICH WAS AN ILL-SUPPLIED AND POOR CITY TO DEFEND IN THE FIRST PLACE.

I HEARD YOU HELPED YOUR LORD FIGHT CAO CAO'S FORCES AT XINYE RECENTLY.

A MILLION MEN, I WOULD SAY.

BUT WITH YOUR RECENT EXPERIENCE, SURELY YOU MUST HAVE SOME IDEA OF HOW MANY CAO CAO'S FORCES TRULY NUMBER AT, NO?

HE THEN CAPTURED YUAN SHAO'S FORCE OF 5 OR 600,000 AND SINCE THEN, HE'S RECRUITED ABOUT 3 OR 400,000 MORE.

OH NO, I'M SURE HE HAS *AT LEAST* THAT MANY. CAO CAO'S FORCES ALREADY NUMBERED AT AROUND 2 OR 300,000 PRIOR TO DEFEATING YUAN SHAO.

DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S A LITTLE EXAGGERATED...?

I ONLY SAID A MILLION BEFORE AS TO NOT SCARE YOUR OFFICERS TOO MUCH.

HE ALSO OBTAINED JINGZHOU'S ARMY OF 2 OR 300,000 AS OF LATE, WHICH WOULD THEN BRING UP THE TOTAL SUM TO AROUND 1,500,000.

AND HOW MANY MEN OF YOUR TALENTS?

LITERALLY A WHOLE WAGON-FULL, I'M SURE.

COUNTING ONLY THOSE WITH REAL COURAGE AND LEADERSHIP, I'M SURE THERE'S AT LEAST 2000.

AND WHAT OF THE NUMBER OF HIS GENERALS AND OFFICERS?

HE IS PREPARING A FLEET AND HIS ENCAMP-MENTS STRETCH FOR HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF LI ACROSS THE YANGTZE RIVER. WHAT ELSE COULD HE BE PLANNING OTHER THAN TO INVADE WU?

WHAT DO YOU THINK CAO CAO'S NEXT MOVE WILL BE NOW THAT JINGZHOU HAS FALLEN TO HIS HANDS?

HAHAHA!

THEN DO YOU THINK WU SHOULD FIGHT OR SURREN-DER?

LU SU TELLS ME YOU ARE A MOST WISE ADVISOR. PLEASE LEND ME YOUR WISDOM ON WHAT WU MUST DO.

I DO NOT MIND, PLEASE TELL ME HONESTLY.

THOUGH I WOULD LIKE TO TELL SIR MY HONEST OPINION, I'M AFRAID YOU WOULD NOT WISH TO HEAR IT...

AS YOU WISH, SIR.

IF SIR WISHES TO CONTINUE ON THE GREAT WILL OF THE SUN JIAN AND SUN CE, YOU MUST FORGE AN ALLIANCE WITH MY LORD AND MOBILIZE THE TROOPS FOR WAR WITHOUT DELAY.

IN THIS AGE OF CONFLICT, YOU SIR, HAVE ESTABLISHED A STRONG FOOTHOLD SOUTH OF THE GREAT RIVER. MEANWHILE, MY LORD HAD ESTABLISHED A BASE BY THE HAN RIVER TO CONTEST FOR THE REST OF CHINA AGAINST CAO CAO. BUT ALAS, JINGZHOU HAS FALLEN TO CAO CAO, WHO HAS NOW GROWN STRONGER THAN EVER. SEEING NO APPROPRIATE FOOTHOLD TO FIGHT CAO CAO FROM, MY LORD HAS TEMPORARILY RETREATED TO JIANGXIA.

YOU'RE TELLING ME TO SUR-RENDER?

IF, HOWEVER, YOU SEE THIS AS A HOPELESS FIGHT, IT WOULD BE BEST TO SUBMIT TO CAO CAO.

YES, JUST AS YOUR OTHER RETAINERS HAVE SUGGESTED. IF YOU THROW AWAY YOUR SWORD AND GIVE UP YOUR AUTHORITY AND LAND, I'M SURE CAO CAO WOULD NOT TREAT YOU TOO HARSHLY.

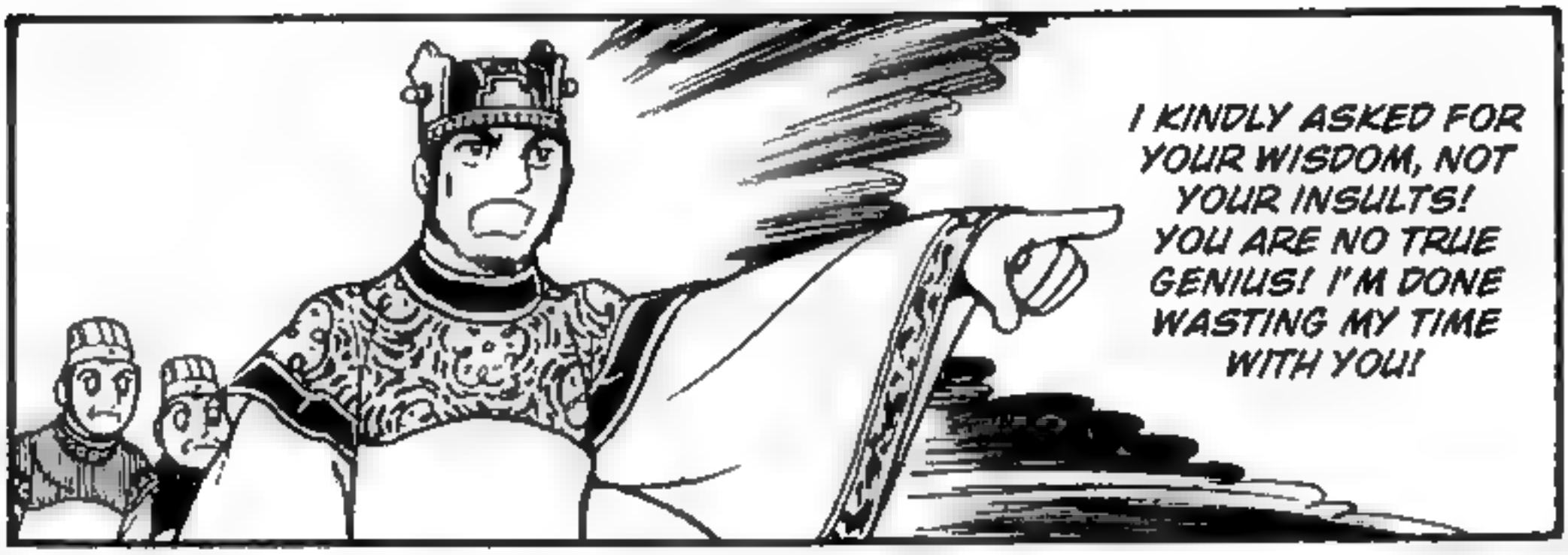
IF CAO CAO TRULY IS THAT STRONG AND THE SITUATION SO DIRE, WHY DOES LIU BEI NOT SURRENDER?

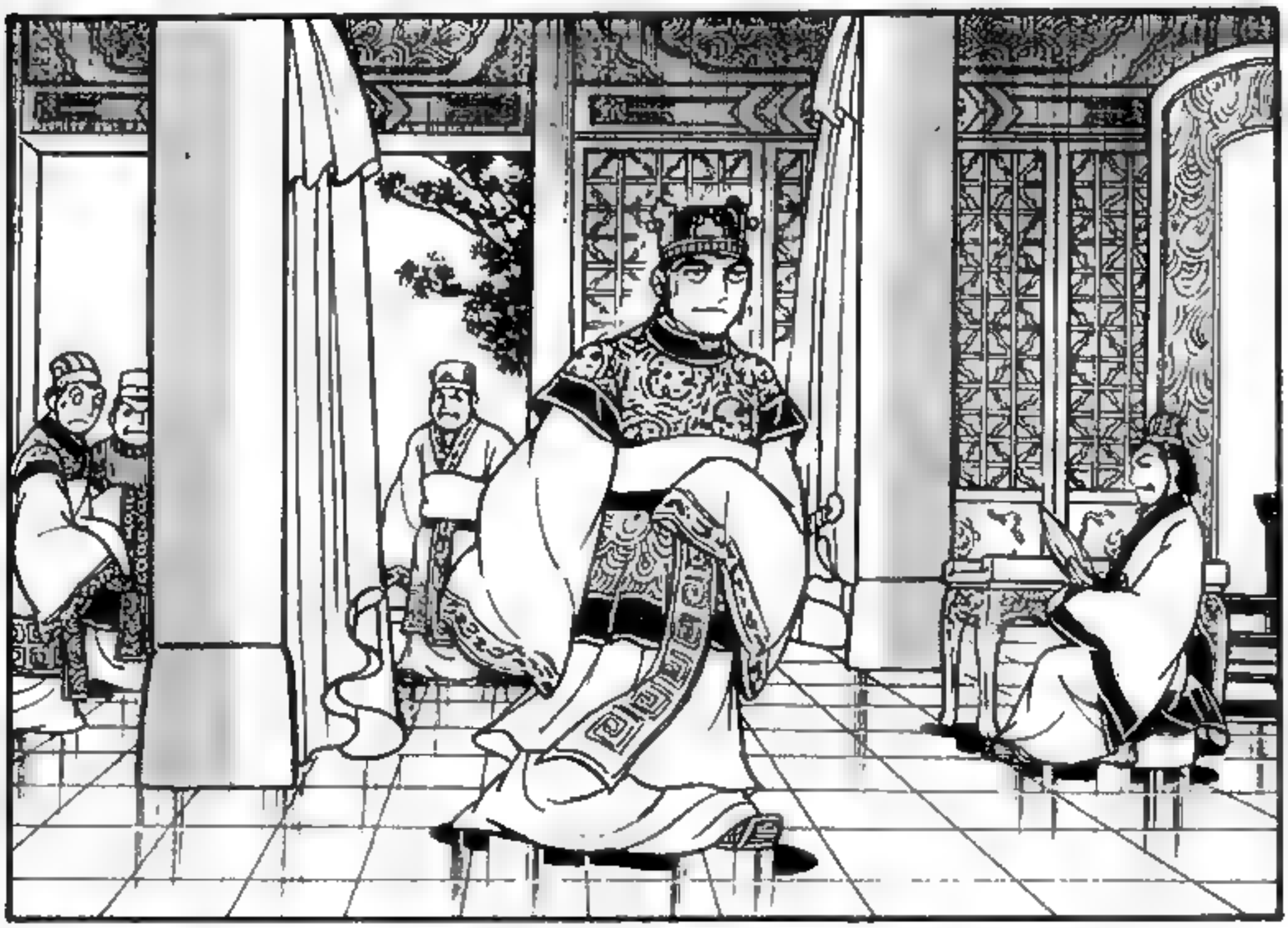
HMM...

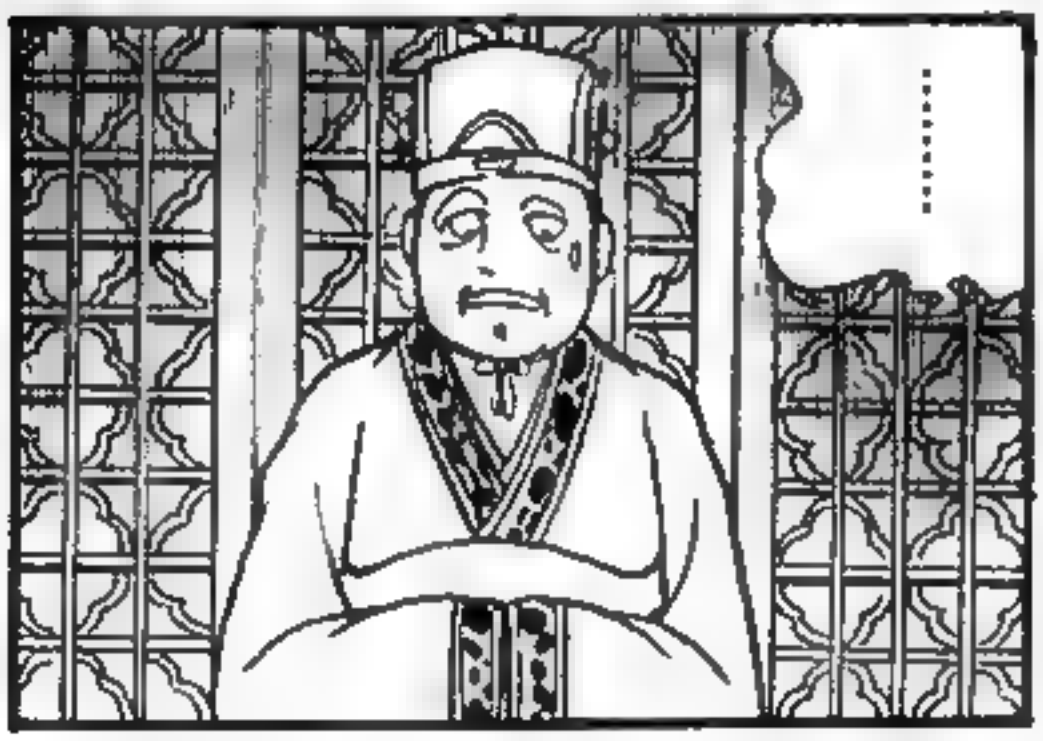
LIKE TIAN HENG, MY LORD IS MUCH TOO NOBLE TO SURRENDER. NOT ONLY THAT, HE IS A MEMBER OF THE HAN IMPERIAL FAMILY AND WELL RESPECTED BY HIS PEOPLE. EVEN IF IT IS HEAVEN'S WILL THAT MY LORD SHOULD FAIL, HOW COULD HE EVER BRING HIMSELF TO BOW DOWN TO A LOWLY CRIMINAL AS CAO CAO? WHY, MY VERY HEAD WOULD FLY IF I EVEN SUGGESTED SUCH A THING TO MY LORD.

LONG AGO, TIAN HENG, THE KING OF QI, REFUSED TO SURRENDER TO THE GREAT FOUNDER OF HAN (LIU BANG) AND INSTEAD TOOK HIS OWN LIFE.

SO YOU THINK SURRENDER ISN'T AN OPTION BENEATH SOMEONE LIKE ME!?


I KINDLY ASKED FOR YOUR WISDOM, NOT YOUR INSULTS! YOU ARE NO TRUE GENIUS! I'M DONE WASTING MY TIME WITH YOU!

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SOME GENIUS HE TURNED OUT TO BE...

THAT SUN QUAN IS MORE SENSITIVE THAN I THOUGHT.

HOW COULD YOU SAY SUCH HARSH WORDS TO MY LORDS?

HA HA HA HA

IF HE ONLY ASKED ME HOW TO BEAT CAO CAO, I WOULD HAVE GLADLY TOLD HIM...

HE BECAME SO UPSET EVEN THOUGH HE ONLY ASKED ABOUT THE NUMBER OF CAO CAO'S FORCES AND WHETHER HE SHOULD FIGHT OR SURRENDER.

OF COURSE I DO. CAO CAO MAY BOAST A MILLION SOLDIERS BUT THEY'RE NOTHING MORE THAN A SWARM OF ANTS TO MY EYES.

SO YOU BELIEVE WE CAN WIN?

O-OF COURSE. PLEASE WAIT RIGHT HERE, I SHALL ASK HIM TO MEET WITH YOU ONCE MORE.

BUT I HAVE NO INTENTION OF FORGING AN ALLIANCE WITH A MAN WHO HAS ALREADY SURRENDERED IN HIS HEART.

MY LORD.

"OH NO, I CAN'T ASK MY LORD TO SURRENDER, HE'S TOO NOBLE FOR THAT."

AM I BUT A LOWLY PEASANT COMPARED TO HIS PRECIOUS LIU BEI!?

WHY, I'VE NEVER BEEN SO INSULTED IN MY LIFE BEFORE!

C-CALM DOWN, SIR.

LU SU! I THOUGHT YOU TOLD ME YOU BROUGHT OVER A GENIUS! WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS!?

KONGMING WAS NOT FINISHED GIVING YOU HIS ADVICE. HE SAID YOU WERE TOO SENSITIVE TO EVEN ASK HOW TO BEAT CAO CAO.

HE'S RIGHT. CONSIDERING THE CRISIS WE'RE IN, IT WAS QUITE PETTY OF ME TO GET SO ANGRY OVER A MATTER LIKE THAT.

MN...

A MOST WISE DECISION, MY LORD.

ALRIGHT, I SHALL MEET WITH HIM ONCE MORE TO ASK FOR HIS FULL ADVICE.

GOOD, DON'T LET ANYONE ELSE IN. I WANT A PRIVATE TALK.

HE'S STILL WAITING FOR YOU BACK IN THE GUEST ROOM.

WHERE IS HE NOW?

NO, NOT AT ALL. I SHOULD BE THE ONE APOLOGIZING FOR MAKING SUCH RUDE REMARKS.
PLEASE EXCUSE ME FOR MY OUTBURST EARLIER.

SO YOU'VE REALIZED AT LAST.

THINKING RATIONALLY, I MUST ADMIT THAT CAO CAO HAS ALWAYS BEEN A COMMON ENEMY FOR BOTH LIU BEI AND I.

NUMBERS ARE OF NO CONCERN. THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS IS SIR'S WILL TO FIGHT. NOW THEN, WILL YOU FIGHT OR SURRENDER?
BUT EVEN SO, MY ARMY ONLY NUMBERS AT 100,000 AND HAS BEEN SPOILED BY PEACE FOR TOO LONG. I FEAR WE WON'T BE A MATCH FOR CAO CAO'S FORCES.

THEN WE MUST DELAY NO LONGER LEST WE ALLOW VICTORY TO SLIP FROM OUR FINGERS.

MY HEART HAS ALREADY BEEN SET. AS THE PROUD LEADER OF WU, I CANNOT SUBMIT TO CAO CAO.

WE CAN INFLICT A DEVASTATING BLOW TO THEIR MORALE IF WE MAKE THE FIRST MOVE. IF ALL GOES WELL, THE SOLDIERS OF JINGZHOU WILL BEGIN TO REVOLT AND CAUSE INTERNAL PROBLEMS.

CAO CAO'S VAST ARMY HAS MARCHED TOO FAR AND TOO FAST IN GETTING HERE, LEAVING HIS SOLDIERS EXHAUSTED. AS FOR HIS NAVY, IT IS COMPRISED MOSTLY OF NORTHERNERS WHO ARE UNACCUSTOMED TO FIGHTING ON WATER. NOT ONLY THAT, THE PEOPLE OF JINGZHOU ARE NOT ENTIRELY SUPPORTIVE OF CAO CAO'S CAUSE.

ONCE THAT HAPPENS, CAO CAO'S FORCES WILL BEGIN TO CRUMBLE AND THEY WILL QUICKLY TRY TO RETREAT BACK NORTH. THAT WILL BE OUR BEST CHANCE TO REGAIN JINGZHOU AND SOLIDIFY OUR TERRITORIES.

AN EXCELLENT IDEA!

ONCE THAT HAS BEEN DONE, WE CAN THEN BRING ON THE FIGHT TO HIS LANDS UP NORTH.

YES, SIR!

LU SU, I HAVE MADE MY MIND. TELL THE MEN TO PREPARE FOR WAR.

WHAT!?

*PREPARE FOR WAR, GENTLEMEN!*

WHA?

OH NO! HE FELL FOR KONG-MING'S TRAP!

OF COURSE NOT. THAT WAS THE ORDER GIVEN BY OUR LORD JUST NOW.

SURELY YOU JEST?

YES, WE MUST!

WE MUST SPEAK WITH HIM THIS INSTANT!

MY LORD, WE HAVE A MOST URGENT MATTER TO DISCUSS WITH YOU.

BEFORE CAO CAO WAS THE GREAT IMPOSING FIGURE, THERE WAS YUAN SHAO. BUT EVEN WITH ALL THE ADVANTAGE IN NUMBERS, YUAN SHAO WAS ANNHILATED BY CAO CAO. SINCE THEN, CAO CAO HAS GROWN EVEN MORE POWERFUL. JUST WHAT CHANCE DO WE STAND?

AFTER HEARING YOUR DECISION TO FIGHT, WE WOULD LIKE TO REMIND YOU WHAT HAPPENED TO YUAN SHAO.

NOW THAT LIU BEI IS BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE, HE HAS SENT KONGMING HERE TO MAKE US FIGHT HIS BATTLES FOR HIM.

PLEASE THINK OVER THIS MATTER CAREFULLY, MY LORD. DO NOT LET YOURSELF BE DECEIVED BY KONGMING'S WORDS.

I BEG OF YOU, MY LORD. PLEASE DO NOT LET WU BECOME THE SCORCHED PAWS OF A CAT.

EXACTLY, MY LORD. THE SITUATION IS AKIN TO THAT FABLE IN WHICH THE WILY MONKEY DUPES THE CLUELESS CAT INTO FETCHING CHESTNUTS FROM A FIRE, ONLY TO EAT ALL OF THEM UP FOR HIMSELF.

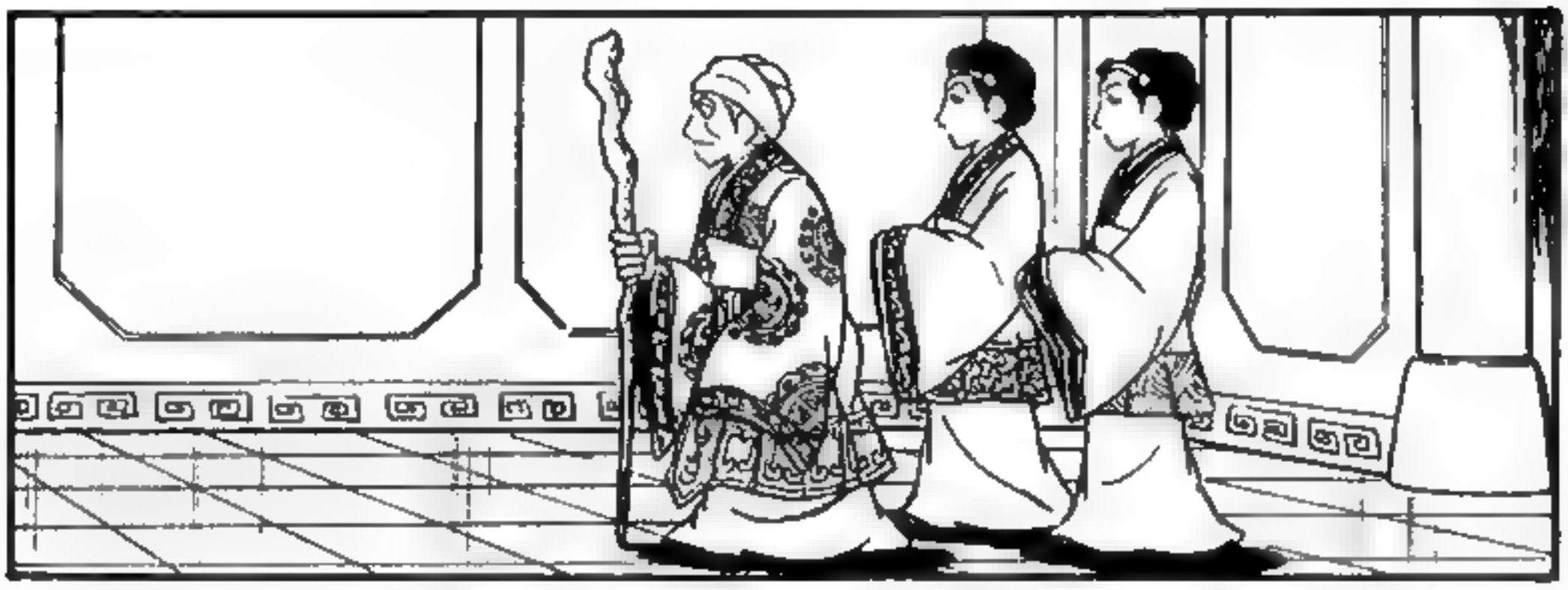
A-ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT. I SHALL THINK ABOUT THE MATTER MORE DEEPLY.

THOSE PEACE-SAYERS ARE ONLY TRYING TO SECURE THEIR OWN SAFETY AND CARE NOT FOR WU. NOT ONLY THAT, SURRENDERING TO CAO CAO WOULD BE LETTING THE HARD EFFORTS OF YOUR LATE FATHER AND ELDER BROTHER GO TO WASTE.

YOU MUST NOT CHANGE YOUR MIND, MY LORD.

L-LET GO OF ME!

AGHH... JUST WHAT AM I TO DO...?



MOTHER!
WHAT'S THE MATTER MY DEAR?

WELL YOU SEE, THE ENTIRE COURT HAS BEEN SPLIT INTO TWO FACTIONS: THOSE WHO ADVOCATE WAR AND THOSE WHO ADVOCATE SURRENDER. I'M AT MY WIT'S END ABOUT WHAT TO DO...

IT SEEMS YOU'VE FORGOTTEN THE WORDS OF YOUR LATE BROTHER.

SO THAT'S THE ROOT OF YOUR WORRIES?

O-OF COURSE!

REMEMBER BACK TO WHAT SUN CE SAID BEFORE DEPARTING THIS WORLD. "FOR INTERNAL MATTERS, SEEK THE ADVICE OF ZHANG ZHAO. FOR OUTER MATTERS, SEEK THE ADVICE OF ZHOU YU."

I SHALL CALL FORTH ZHOU YU IMMEDIATELY.

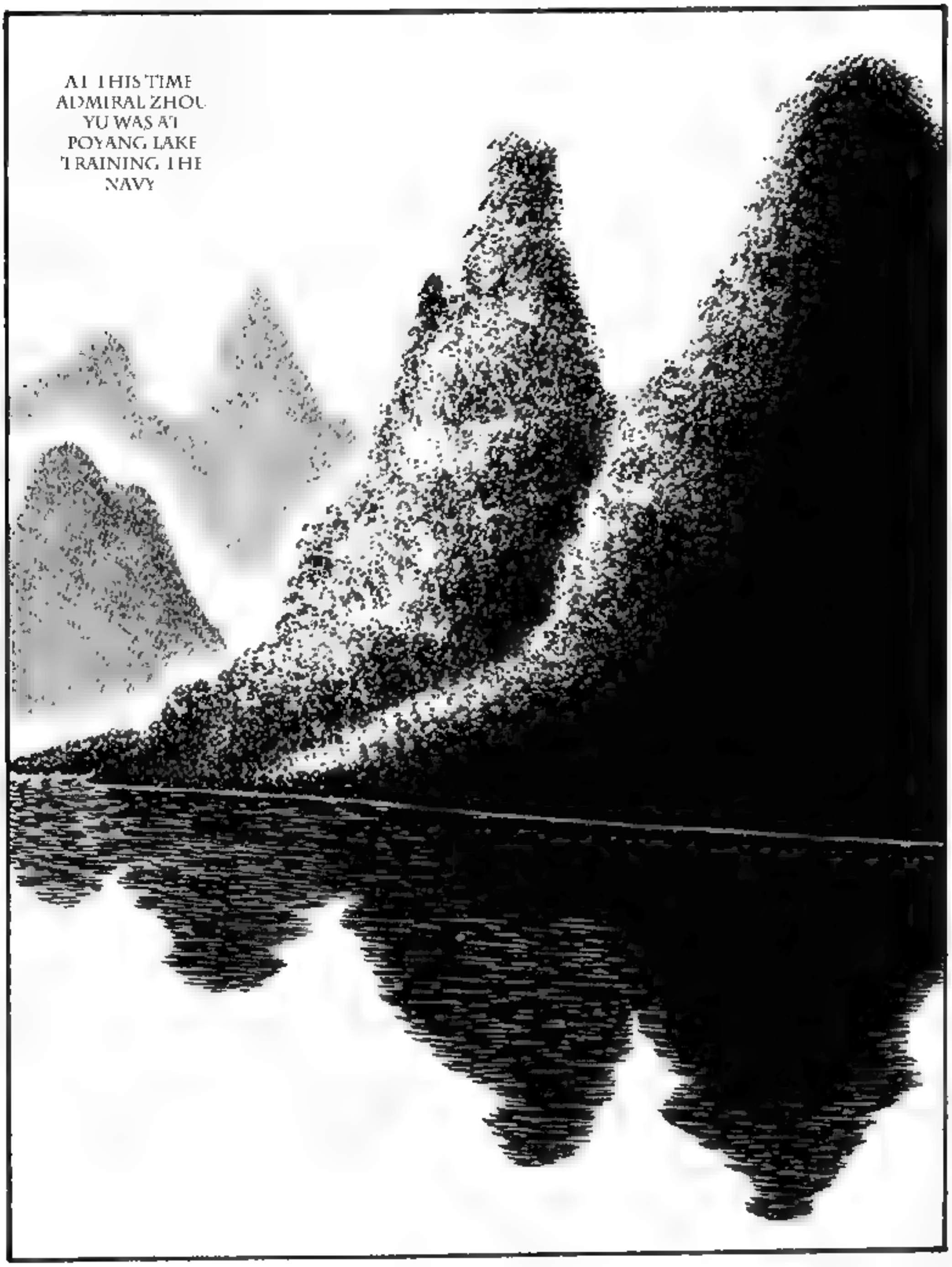
YOU CALLED, SIR?

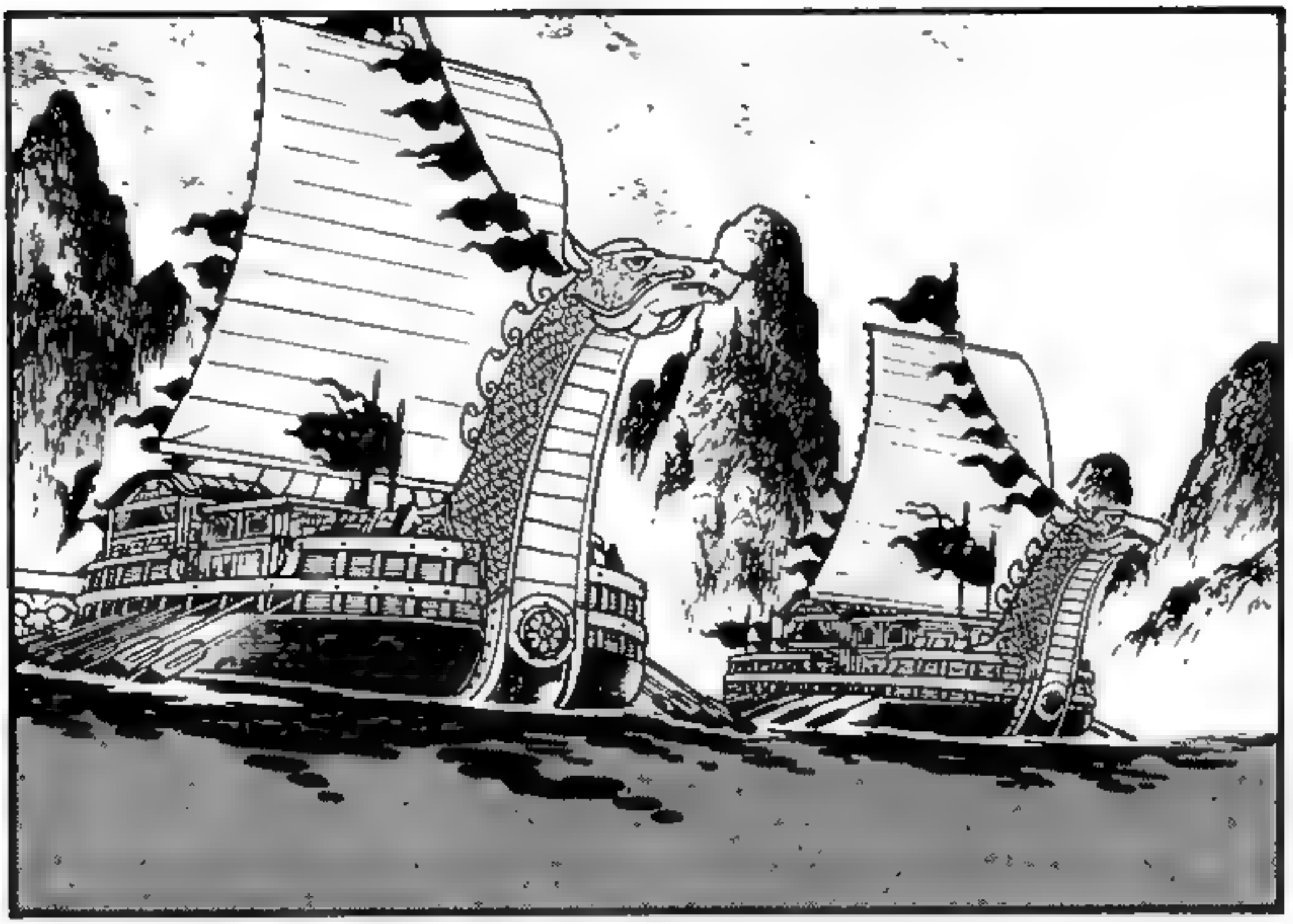
ARE YOU THERE!?

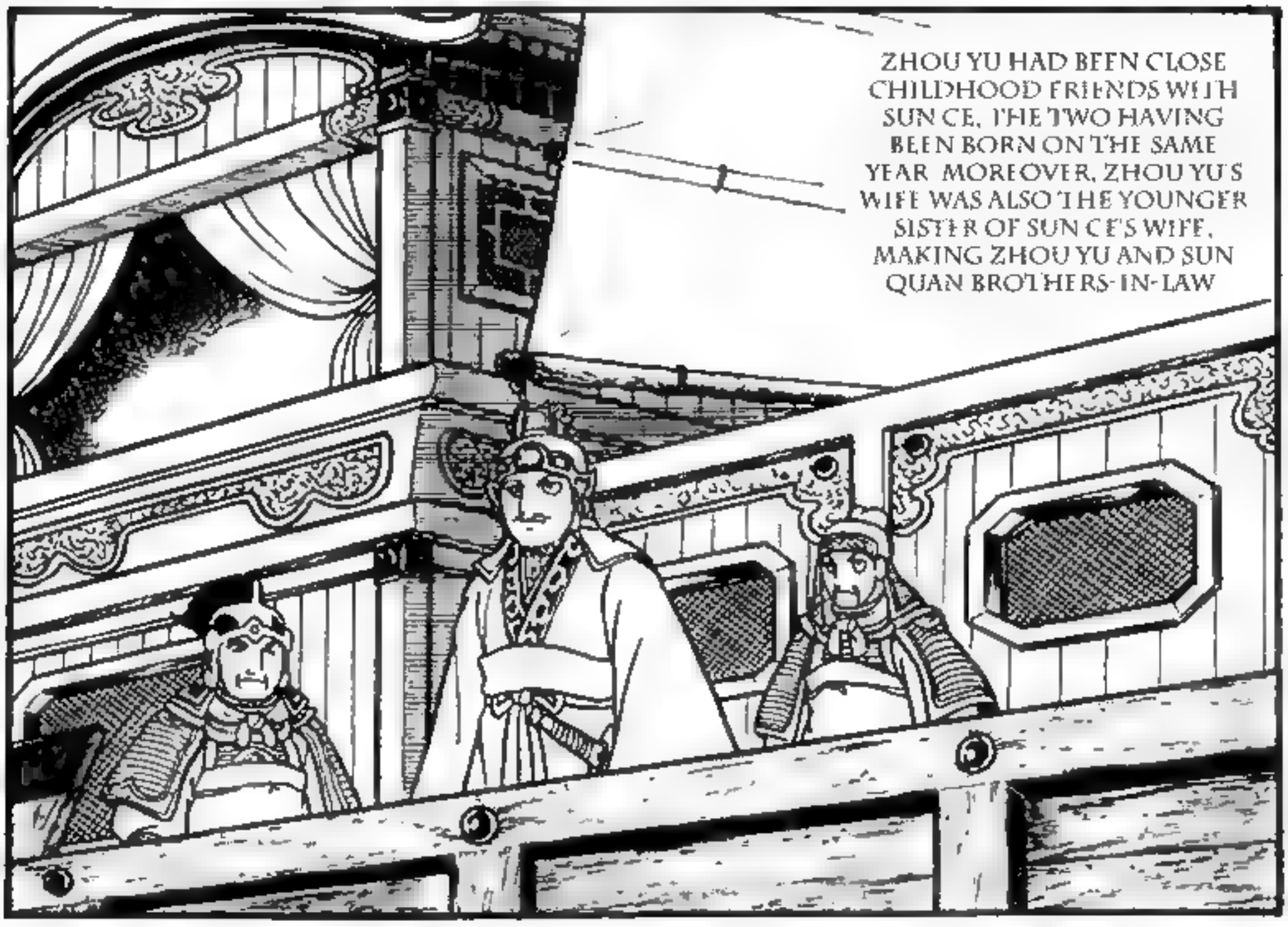
YES, SIR.

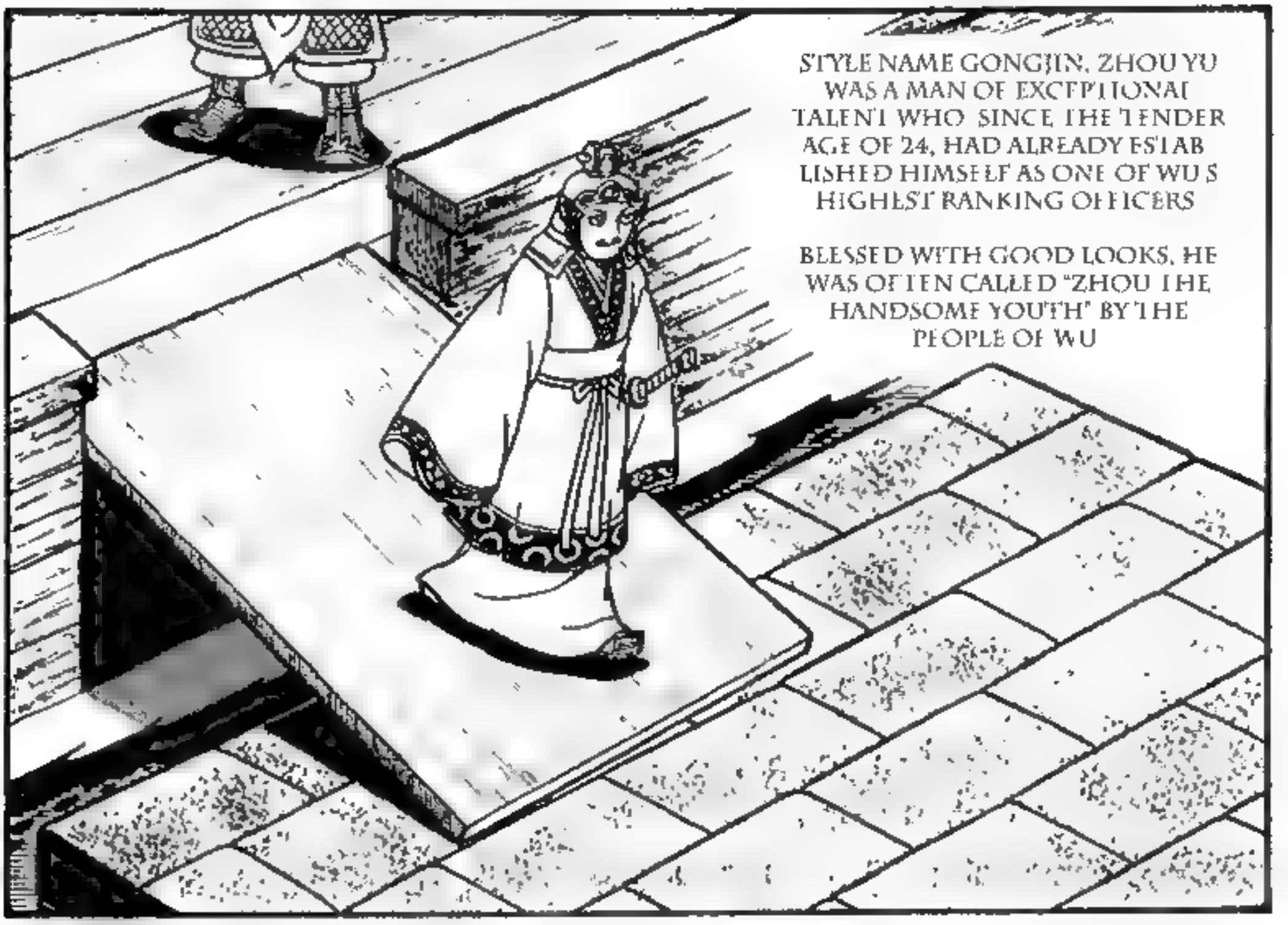
DELIVER THIS LETTER TO ZHOU YU AT ONCE.

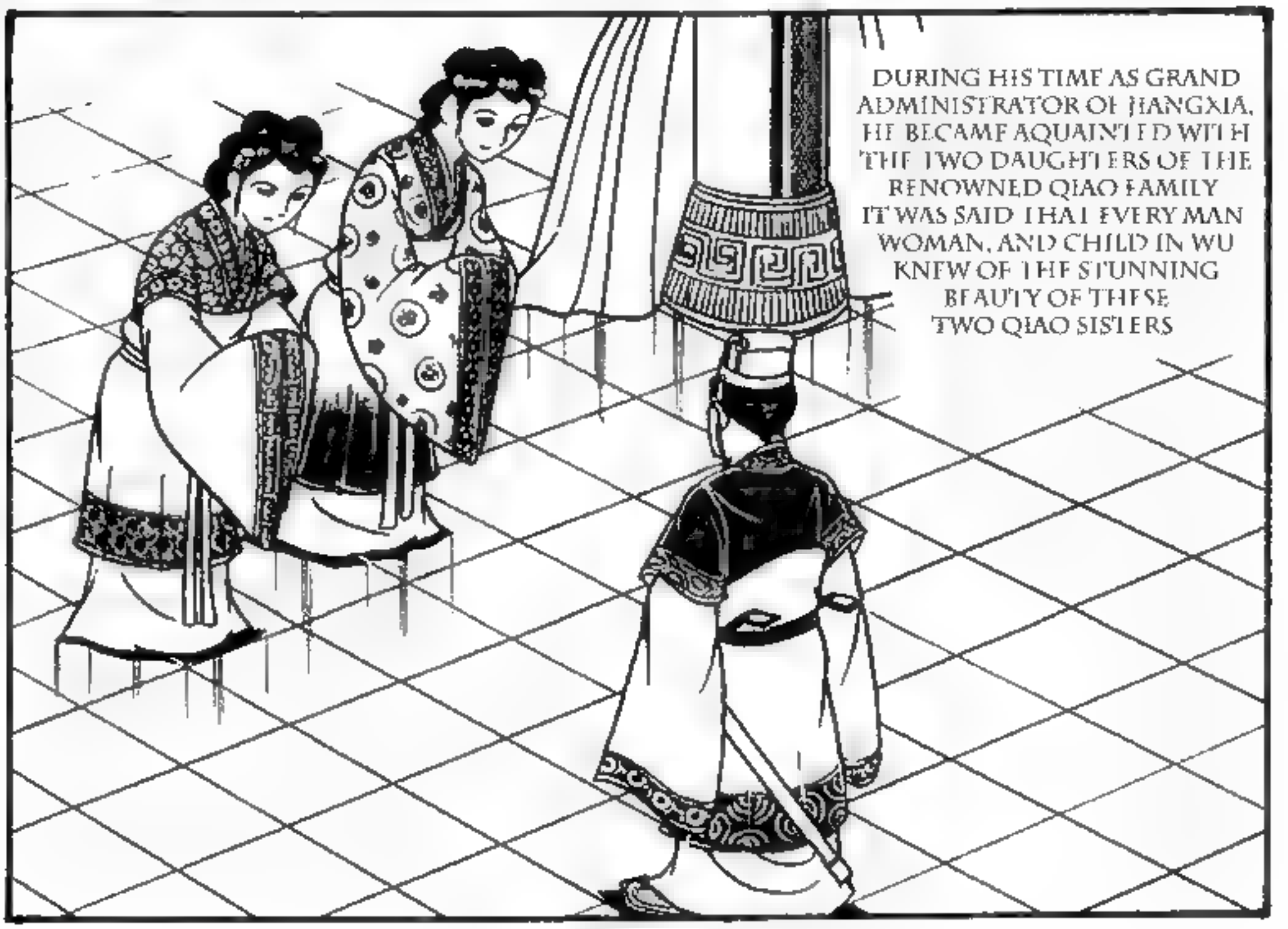
# ADMIRAL ZHOU YU

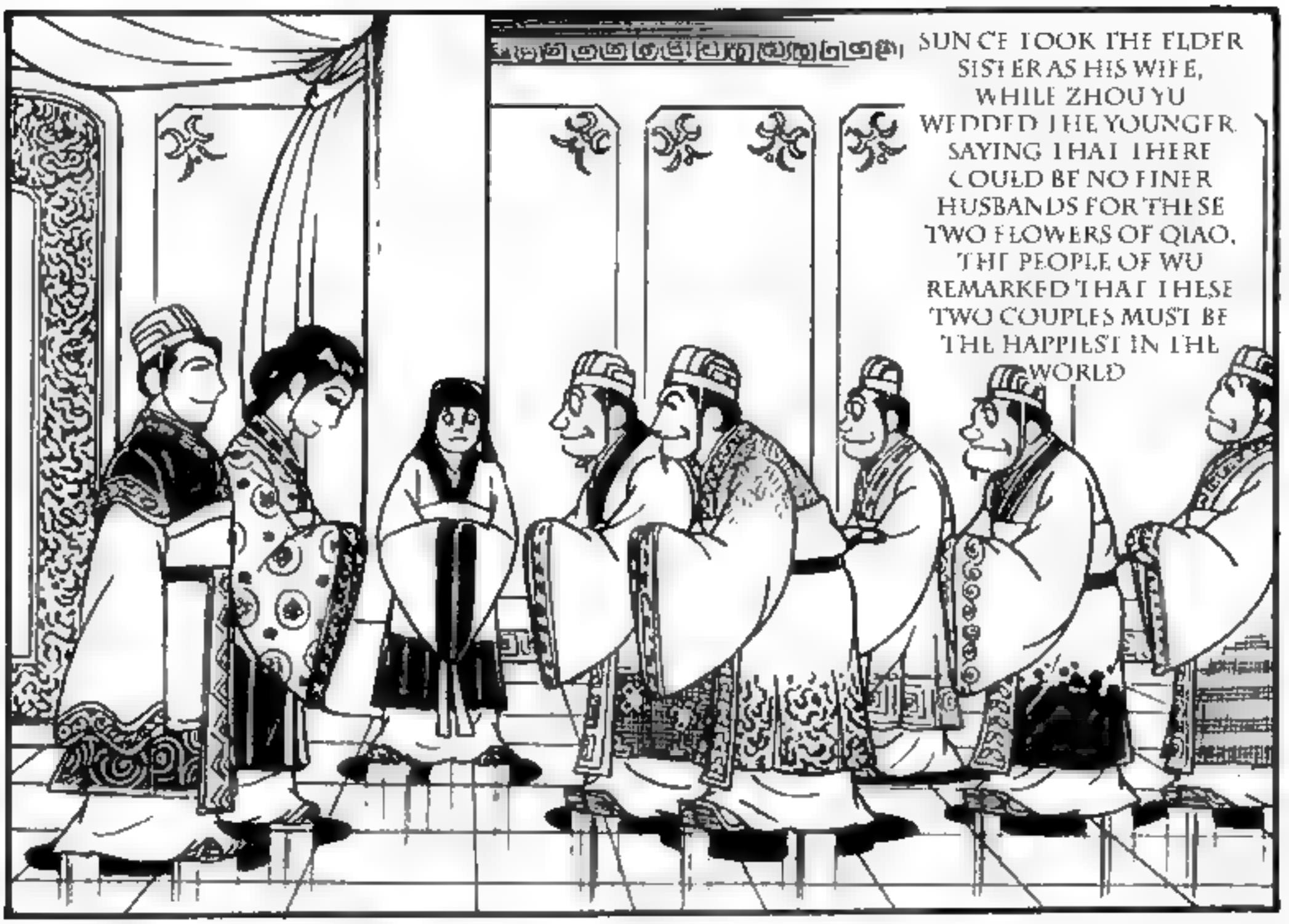





ZHOU YU HAD BEEN CLOSE CHILDHOOD FRIENDS WITH SUN CE. THE TWO HAVING BEEN BORN ON THE SAME YEAR. MOREOVER, ZHOU YU'S WIFE WAS ALSO THE YOUNGER SISTER OF SUN CE'S WIFE, MAKING ZHOU YU AND SUN QUAN BROTHERS-IN-LAW


STYLE NAME GONGJIN, ZHOU YU WAS A MAN OF EXCEPTIONAL TALENT WHO SINCE THE TENDER AGE OF 24, HAD ALREADY ESTAB LISHED HIMSELF AS ONE OF WU S HIGHEST RANKING OFFICERS
BLESSED WITH GOOD LOOKS, HE WAS OFTEN CALLED "ZHOU THE HANDSOME YOUTH" BY THE PEOPLE OF WU


DURING HIS TIME AS GRAND ADMINISTRATOR OF JIANGXIA, HE BECAME AQUAINTED WITH THE TWO DAUGHTERS OF THE RENOWNED QIAO FAMILY IT WAS SAID THAT EVERY MAN WOMAN, AND CHILD IN WU KNEW OF THE STUNNING BEAUTY OF THESE TWO QIAO SISTERS


SUN CE TOOK THE ELDER SISTER AS HIS WIFE, WHILE ZHOU YU WEDDED THE YOUNGER, SAYING THAT THERE COULD BE NO FINER HUSBANDS FOR THESE TWO FLOWERS OF QIAO. THE PEOPLE OF WU REMARKED THAT THESE TWO COUPLES MUST BE THE HAPPIEST IN THE WORLD

*THE NAMES OF THE TWO QIAO SISTERS ARE UNRECORDED AND THUS ARE OFTEN REFERRED TO AS "DA QIAO" AND "XIAO QIAO" WHICH LITERALLY MEAN "ELDER QIAO" AND "YOUNGER QIAO."

THANK YOU FOR DELIVERING THIS MESSAGE. I SHALL HEAD TO CHAISANG RIGHT AWAY.

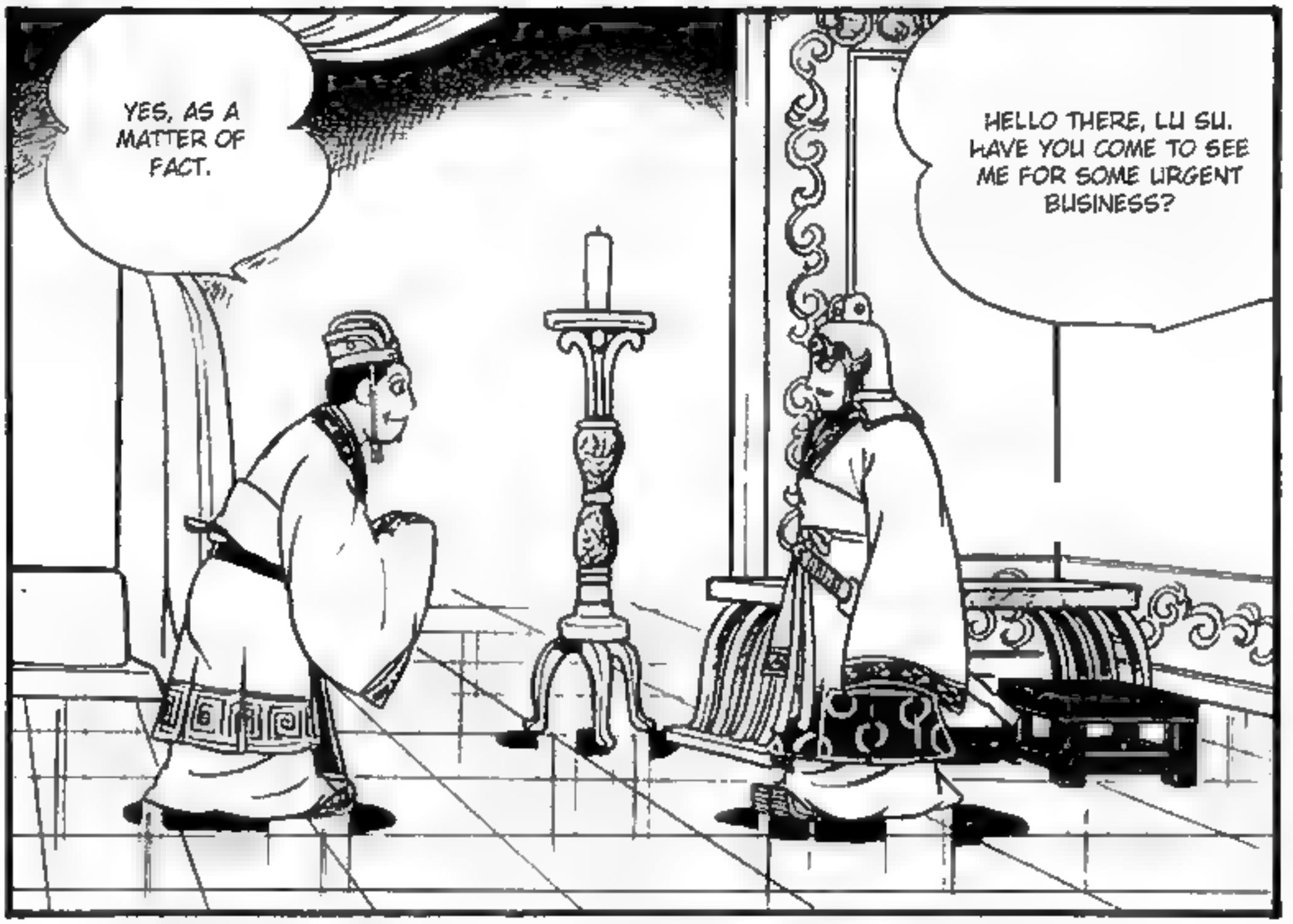
YES, MASTER.

YOU THERE, GO MAKE THE NEEDED PREPARATIONS FOR THE JOURNEY.

WELL, LET HIM IN AT ONCE.

LU SU?

ALSO, I MUST INFORM YOU THAT LU SU HAS COME TO MEET WITH YOU.


YES, AS A MATTER OF FACT.
HELLO THERE, LU SU. HAVE YOU COME TO SEE ME FOR SOME URGENT BUSINESS?

YES.

YOU'VE RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM OUR LORD RECENTLY, RIGHT?

WELL YOU SEE, I'VE BROUGHT OVER ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING, THE TRUSTED ADVISOR OF LIU BEI, WHO HAS CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE FIGHTING CAO CAO.

YES, I HAVE.

THEN YOU MUST'VE HEARD ABOUT THE DEBATE ON WHETHER TO FIGHT OR SURRENDER.

OH?

IT IS KONGMING'S FIRM BELIEF THAT CAO CAO CAN BE DEFEATED AS LONG AS OUR LORD JOINS HANDS WITH LIU BEI.

AH, I SEE WHERE YOU ARE GOING WITH THIS.

I PERSONALLY BELIEVE THAT IT SHALL BE THE END FOR WU IF WE DECIDE TO SURRENDER.

THANK YOU, ZHOU YU. I'LL BRING HIM OVER LATER TODAY.

VERY WELL, I SHALL MEET WITH ZHUGE LIANG BEFORE SEEING OUR LORD.

*HMM, SEEMS THE MATTER IS MUCH MORE GRAVE THAN I HAD THOUGHT...*

LET THEM IN.

MASTER, SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE COURT INCLUDING ZHANG ZHAO HAVE COME TO SEE YOU.

YES, SIR.

FORGIVE US FOR THE SUDDEN VISIT, ADMIRAL.
WHAT BRINGS ALL YOU GENTLEMEN HERE TODAY?

WHY YES.

BY THE WAY, WAS THAT LU SU WHO LEFT JUST NOW?

WE'VE ALL COME HERE TO SEE WHAT YOUR OPINION IS ON THIS MATTER OF WAR AGAINST CAO CAO.

THAT LU SU'S AN OUTRAGEOUS FOOL. HE'S LETS HIMSELF BE TOYED AROUND BY KONGMING'S LIES AND TRIES TO LEAD OUR GREAT WU TO RUIN.

YES, THERE'S NOT A DOUBT ABOUT IT IN OUR MINDS.

I PRESUME YOU MEN ARE AGAINST WAR?

WELL, IN ANY CASE, I SHALL TRY TO CLEAR UP THE MATTER TO OUR LORD TOMORROW.

WONDER-FUL!
TO BE HONEST, I HAVE BEEN LEANING TOWARDS NOT FIGHTING AS WELL.

YES, PLEASE DO, ADMIRAL.

YES, THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONCERNS.

OUR LORD IS CURRENTLY HESITATING OVER THE MATTER. I PRAY THAT YOU CAN SUCCESSFULLY CONVINCE HIM.

LOOKS LIKE QUITE THE FIERCE DEBATE'S GOING ON AT CHAISANG.

LET THEM IN.

KAN ZE, LU FAN, ZHU ZHI, AND ZHUGE JIN HAVE COME TO SEE YOU, MASTER.

WHAT BRINGS YOU MEN HERE TODAY?

WE'VE COME TO INQUIRE WHAT SIR'S OPINION IS ON THE MATTER OF WAR AGAINST CAO CAO.

WE ARE STILL AS OF YET UNDECIDED.

AND WHAT SIDE ARE YOU MEN ON?

YES, THAT IS WHY I'M QUITE TROUBLED...

I HEAR YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER ZHUGE LIANG HAS COME TO ADVOCATE AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN HIS LORD AND OURS TO FIGHT AGAINST CAO CAO...

WHAT ABOUT YOU, ZHUGE JIN?

BUT THIS IS A MATTER OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE.

TRUE,

I HAVE BEEN KEEPING SILENT THUS FAR SINCE I WOULD EXPECT PEOPLE TO DISMISS MY OPINION ON THE ACCOUNT OF ME BEING THE BROTHER OF ZHUGE LIANG.

TO SURRENDER IS EASY, WHILE TO FIGHT IS DIFFICULT. YET TRUTH BE TOLD, I BELIEVE WE MUST NOT FIGHT FOR THE SAFETY OF WU.

WHETHER YOU TWO ARE BROTHERS OR NOT DOES NOT CHANGE THE FACT THAT YOU ARE A SERVANT OF WU AND YOUR BROTHER IS NOT. AND, AS A MAN OF WU, YOU MUST ALSO GIVE YOUR OPINION ON WHAT WU MUST NOW DO.

IN ANY CASE, I SHALL THINK DEEPLY OVER THE MATTER BEFORE SPEAKING WITH OUR LORD.

AH, SO YOU DISAGREE WITH YOUR BROTHER. THAT MUST BE QUITE TROUBLING FOR YOU.

YES, OF COURSE.

SO FOR NOW, I KINDLY ASK YOU LEAVE SO THAT I MAY HAVE SOME TIME TO THINK ALONE.

THIS MUST BE QUITE STRESSFUL FOR YOU, MASTER.

IT SEEMS TODAY WILL BE QUITE A BUSY DAY FOR ME...

IT WAS AS ZHOU YU PREDICTED. MANY GENERALS AND OFFICERS VISITED HIS HOME THAT DAY,
AND FIERCELY DEBATED WHETHER OR NOT TO GO TO WAR

LU SU AND ZHUGE LIANG HAVE COME HERE TO SEE YOU...

MASTER.

YES, SIR.

HERE'S NO GOOD SO BRING THEM TO THE WATER-FRONT GUEST ROOM.

GENTLE-MEN!

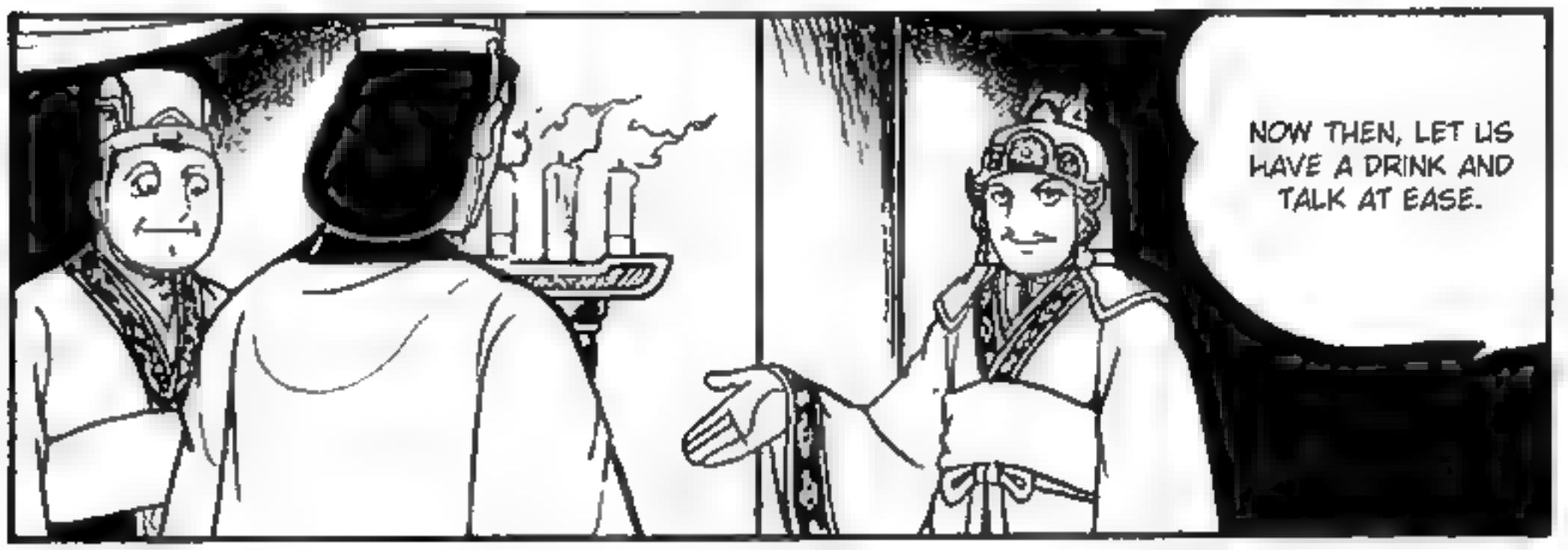
AT THIS RATE, WE COULD BE ARGUING HERE FOR ALL DAY AND ALL NIGHT. LET US DISCUSS THE MATTER FULLY BEFORE OUR LORD TOMORROW MORNING.

IT IS GETTING LATE SO I KINDLY ASK YOU RETURN HOME FOR TOAY.

ギィー

A PLEASURE TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINT-ANCE I AM ZHOU YU GONGJIN.

AND I AM ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING.


NOW THEN, LET US HAVE A DRINK AND TALK AT EASE.

YES, I BELIEVE I HAVE.

HAVE YOU MADE YOUR DECISION YET, ADMIRAL?

NO, I'M AFRAID NOT.

AND WOULD THAT BE FOR WAR?

I BELIEVE THAT IS BEST FOR THE SAFETY OF WU.

WHA!? THEN YOU WISH TO SURRENDER!?

I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE WHAT I'M HEARING RIGHT NOW! AFTER ALL THE BLOOD AND SWEAT THAT SUN JIAN AND SUN CE PUT IN MAKING OUR NATION INTO WHAT IT IS TODAY, YOU WISH TO JUST HAND IT OVER TO CAO CAO WITHOUT A FIGHT!?

AND THINK JUST WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO OUR LORD IF HE SURRENDERED!?

THAT IS MERELY A COWARD'S EXCUSE!

AS REGRETTABLE AS IT MAY BE, I CANNOT AFFORD TO ENDANGER THE COUNTLESS PEOPLE OF WU.

HAHAHA

AHAHAHA!

I'M SURE OUR BRAVE SOLDIERS CAN PREVENT CAO CAO'S SOLDIERS FROM CROSSING THE GREAT RIVER AND SETTING EVEN A SINGLE FOOT ON OUR SOIL!

JUST WHAT SEEMS TO BE SO FUNNY, KONGMING, IF I MAY ASK?

YOU THINK I'M BEHIND THE TIMES!?

WHA!?

PARDON ME, I COULD NOT HELP BUT LAUGH AT HOW BEHIND THE TIMES LU SU SEEMS TO BE.

I FULLY UNDERSTAND YOUR ARDENT PATRIOTISM,

*JUST WHAT IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN!?*

*WHAT!? HAVE YOU REALLY COME TO WU TO ADVOCATE PEACE OR HAVE I JUST GONE DEAF!?*

BUT I'M AFRAID WHAT THE ADMIRAL SAYS IS PERFECTLY REASONABLE CONSIDERING THE CURRENT BALANCE OF POWER IN THE WORLD.

CONSIDER FOR A MOMENT, IF YOU WILL, LU SU.

NO, OF COURSE NOT. I'M MERELY TRYING TO POINT OUT THE FACTS.

MY LORD LIU BEI HAS VALIANTLY TRIED TO OPPOSE CAO CAO ONLY TO NOW END UP IN A PRECARIOUS STATE AT JIANGXIA WHERE EVEN TOMORROW IS NOT GUARANTEED.

THERE'S NOT A MAN IN TODAY'S WORLD THAT DOES NOT KNOW HOW SKILLED CAO CAO IS AT WAR. IN THE PAST, YUAN SHU, YUAN SHAO, DONG ZHUO, LU BU, AND LIU BIAO WERE ALL MUCH MORE POWERFUL. YET THEY'RE ALL NO MORE AND CAO CAO NOW REIGNS SUPREME.

BY SURRENDERING, HE CAN ENSURE THE SAFETY OF HIS LANDS, FORTUNE, AND PEOPLE.

THE REASON WHY THE ADMIRAL HERE ADVOCATES SURRENDER IS TO PREVENT WU FROM BECOMING LIKE THUS.

BUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO MY LORD!?

AN EXCELLENT OBSERVATION. TRULY, YOU UNDERSTAND THE TIMES WE LIVE IN TODAY, KONGMING.

THERE IS!?

WHAT!?

NOW, NOW, PLEASE CALM DOWN. THERE IS ANOTHER WAY TO SEND CAO CAO'S ARMY BACK NORTH WITHOUT FIGHTING NOR SURRENDERING.

PLEASE TELL US THIS METHOD THEN.

THIS WHOLE MATTER CAN BE EASILY SETTLED WITH JUST TWO PEOPLE AND A SMALL BOAT, ON WHICH THEY'LL BE SENT TO CAO CAO ON.

NOW BACK WHEN I WAS STILL LIVING OUT IN THE COUNTRY...

TWO PEOPLE? AND WHO WOULD THEY BE?

YES, YES, ENOUGH ABOUT THE BRONZE BIRD TOWER. JUST TELL ME WHO THESE TWO PEOPLE ARE.

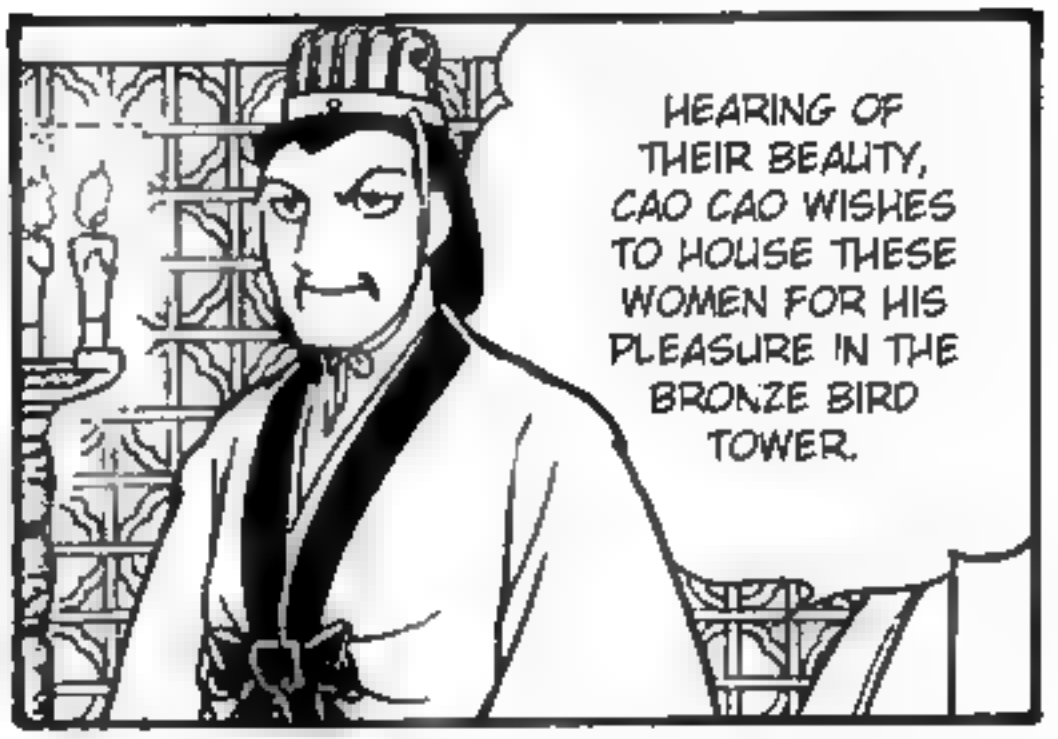
A MOST LAVISH AND LUXURIOUS PAVILLION INDEED, ENOUGH TO MAKE ONE'S EYES SPIN.

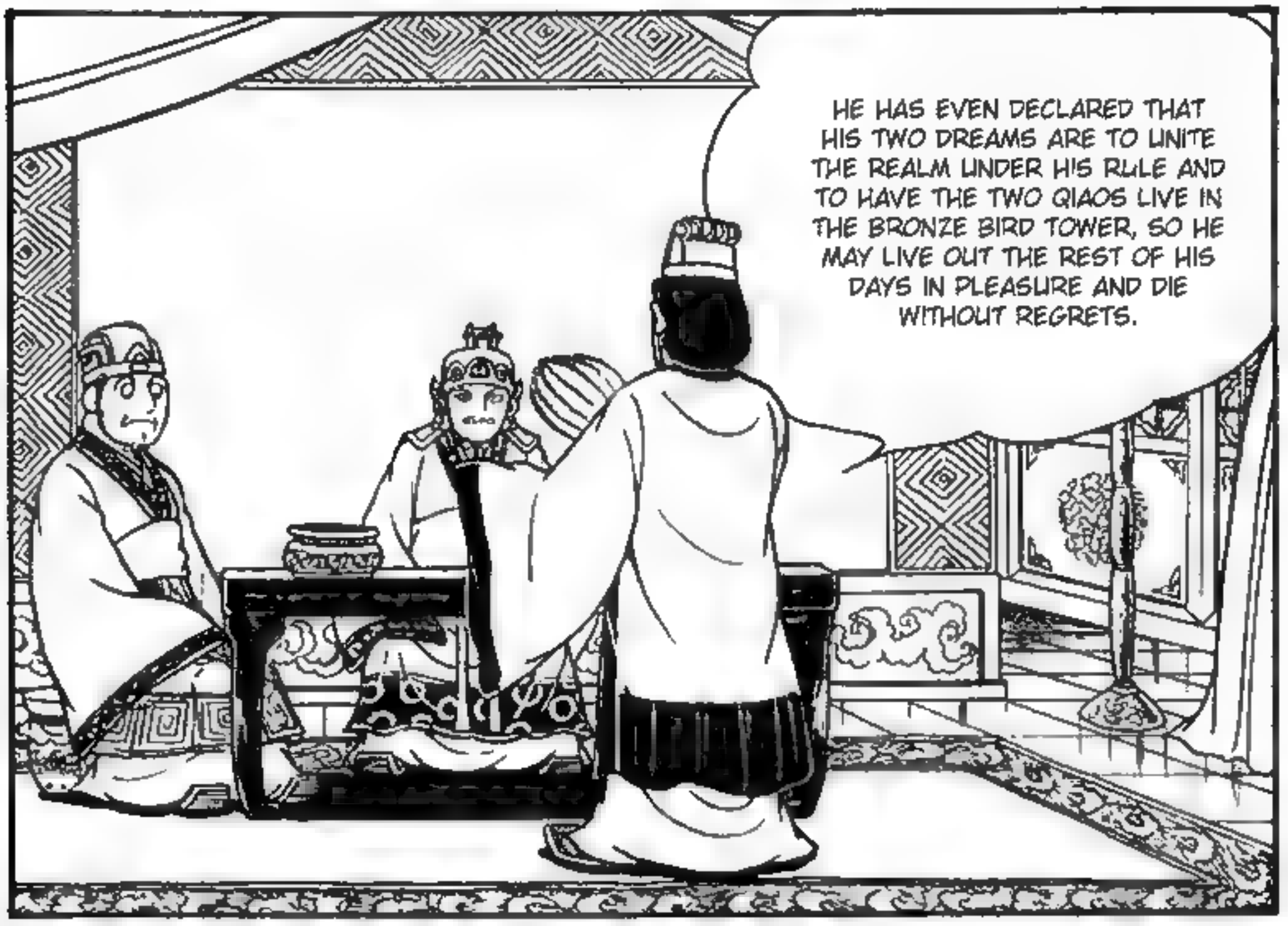
I HEARD CAO CAO HAD BUILT HIMSELF A PAVILLION ON THE ZHANG RIVER TO DISPLAY HIS POWER, HAVING RECENTLY DEFEATED YUAN SHAO AND SUBJUGATED HEBEI. THIS PAVILLION WAS NAMED BRONZE BIRD TOWER, AND IT WAS TO HOUSE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMEN IN THE WORLD.

YES, PLEASE TELL US.

WHAT!?

THE TWO PEOPLE I REFER TO ARE THE TWO DAUGHERS OF A CERTAIN QIAO FAMILY. THESE QIAO SISTERS ARE EXCEPTIONALLY BEAUTIFUL, OR SO I HEAR...


HEARING OF THEIR BEAUTY, CAO CAO WISHES TO HOUSE THESE WOMEN FOR HIS PLEASURE IN THE BRONZE BIRD TOWER.


HE HAS EVEN DECLARED THAT HIS TWO DREAMS ARE TO UNITE THE REALM UNDER HIS RULE AND TO HAVE THE TWO QIAOS LIVE IN THE BRONZE BIRD TOWER, SO HE MAY LIVE OUT THE REST OF HIS DAYS IN PLEASURE AND DIE WITHOUT REGRETS.

A MOST EXCELLENT OPTION, WOULDN'T YOU AGREE, ADMIRAL?

SO I'M QUITE CERTAIN THAT CAO CAO WOULD GLADLY MOVE BACK HIS ARMY IF YOU WOULD ONLY GRANT HIM HIS WISH.

DO YOU HAVE PROOF!?

NO, I'M QUITE CERTAIN OF IT.

T-THAT MUST BE JUST A RUMOUR.

THEN SHOW IT.

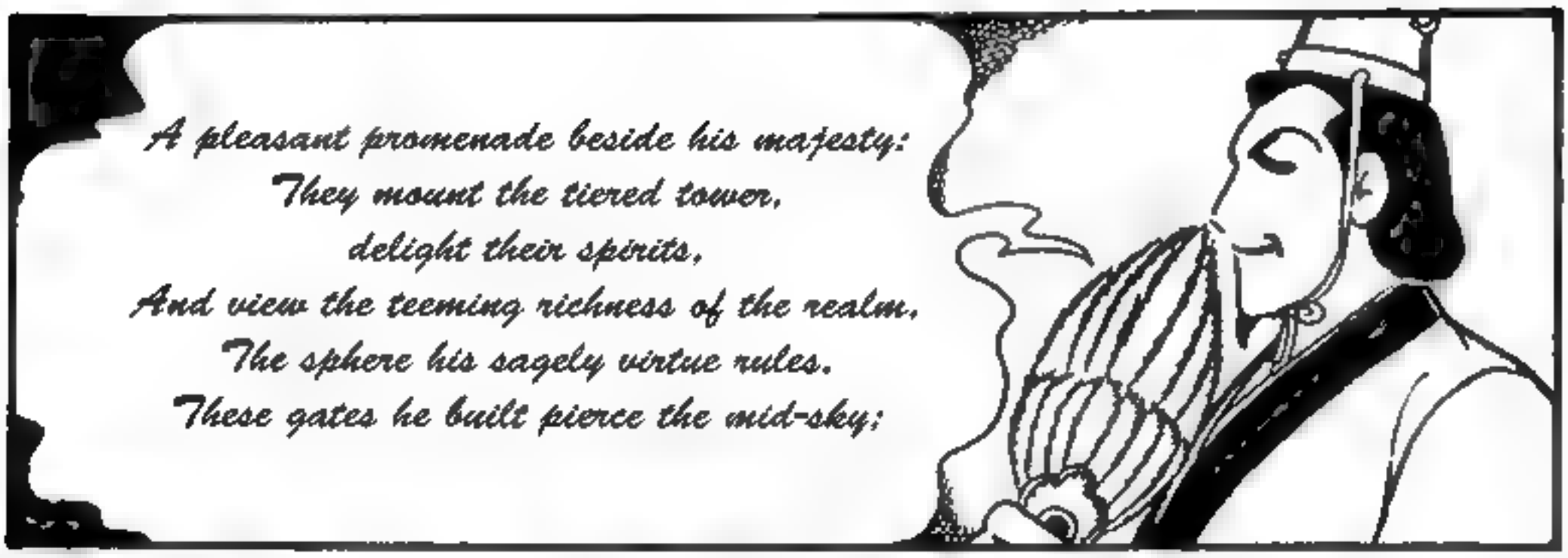
WHY YES I DO.

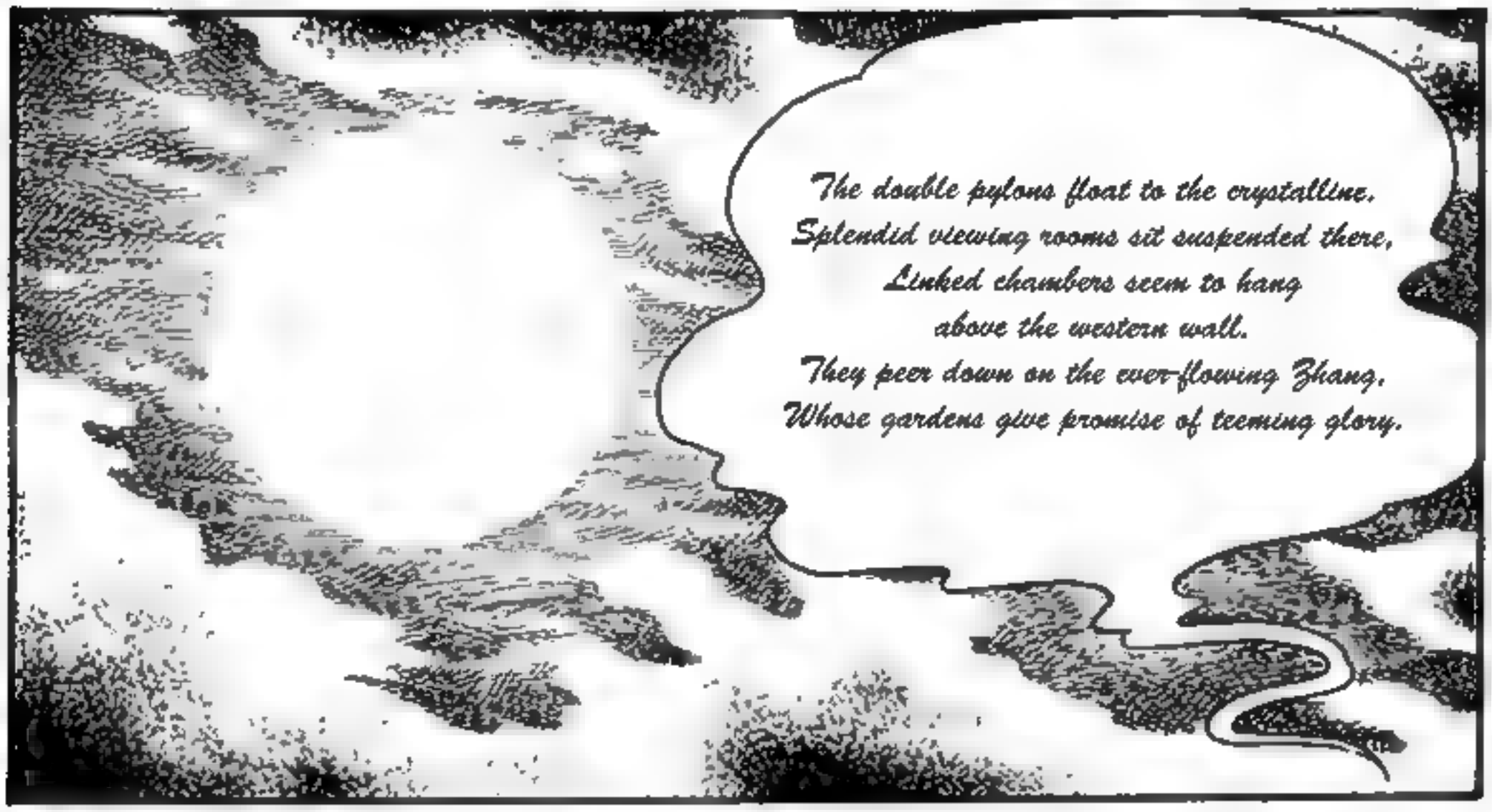
THE THEME OF THAT VERY POEM IS ABOUT CAO CAO'S DESIRE TO RULE OVER CHINA AND WED THE QIAO SISTERS.

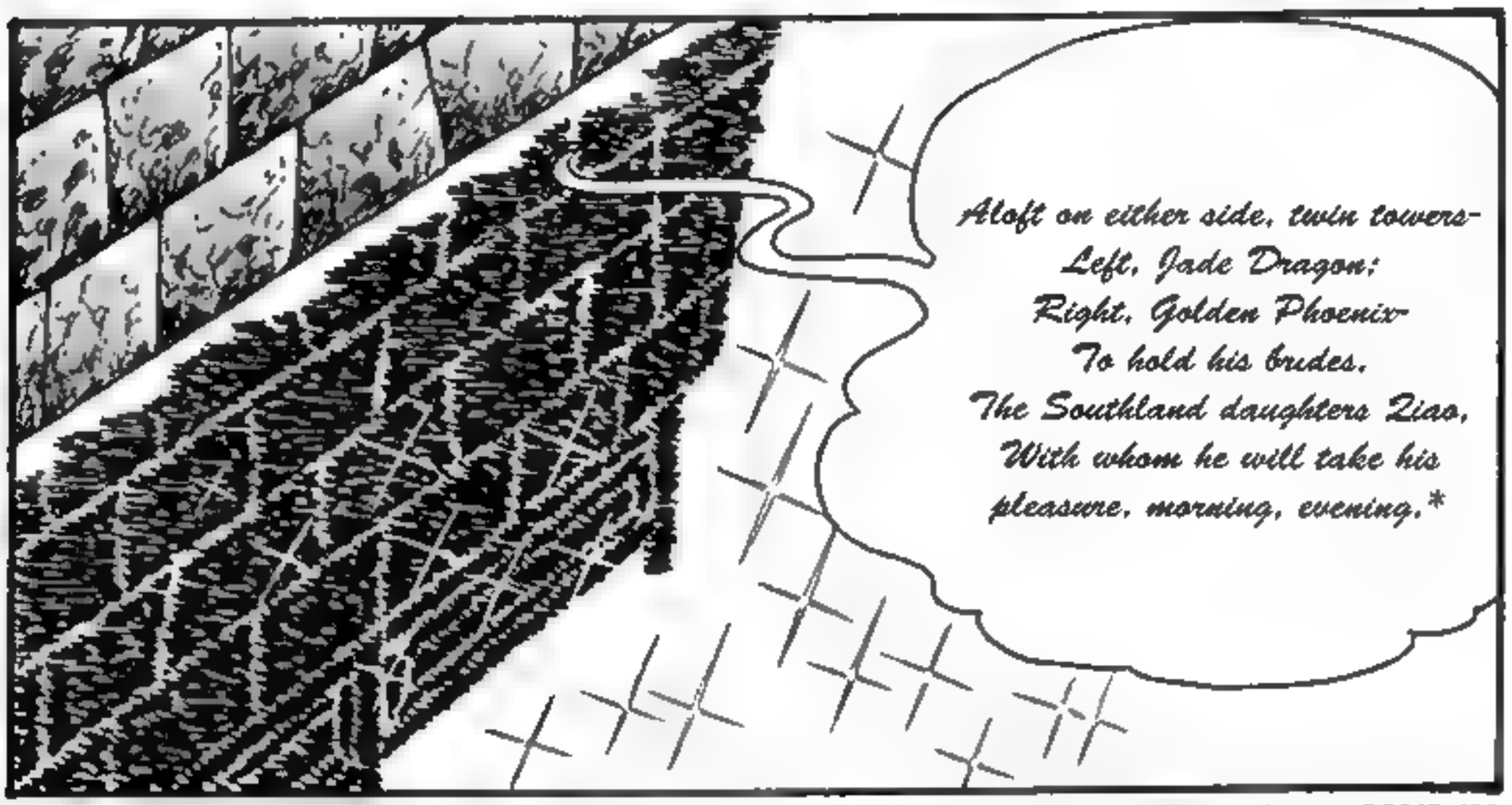
CAO CAO COMMISSIONED HIS THIRD SON CAO ZHI, WHO IS AN ACCOMPLISHED POET, TO WRITE A POEM ABOUT THE BRONZE BIRD TOWER.

YES, I CAN RECITE IT FOR YOU IF YOU'D LIKE.

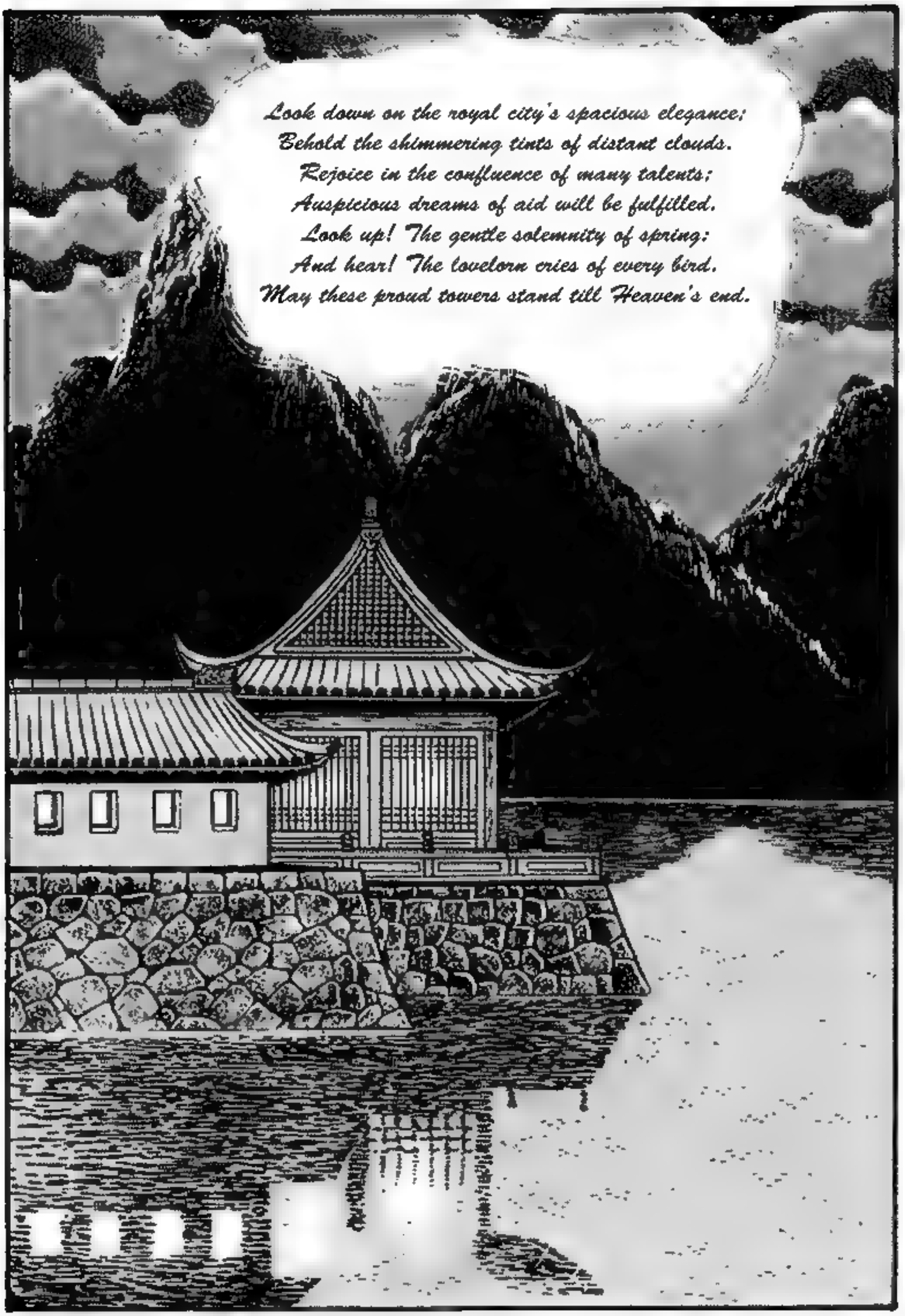
AND DO YOU KNOW HOW THIS POEM GOES...?


A pleasant promenade beside his majesty:
They mount the tiered tower,
delight their spirits,
And view the teeming richness of the realm.
The sphere his sagely virtue rules.
These gates he built pierce the mid-sky;


The double pylons float to the crystalline.
Splendid viewing rooms sit suspended there,
Linked chambers seem to hang
above the western wall.
They peer down on the ever-flowing Zhang.
Whose gardens give promise of teeming glory.


Aloft on either side, twin towers-
Left, Jade Dragon;
Right, Golden Phoenix-
To hold his brides.
The Southland daughters Qiao,
With whom he will take his
pleasure, morning, evening.*

*QIAO CAN MEAN BRIDGE IN CHINESE AND THUS THIS POEM BY CAO ZHI IS ACTUALLY REFERRING TO THE BRIDGES OF THE BRONZE BIRD TOWER AND NOT THE QIAO SISTERS


Look down on the royal city's spacious elegance;
Behold the shimmering tints of distant clouds.
Rejoice in the confluence of many talents;
Auspicious dreams of aid will be fulfilled.
Look up! The gentle solemnity of spring;
And hear! The lovelorn cries of every bird.
May these proud towers stand till Heaven's end.

*EXCERPT OF POEM TAKEN FROM MOSS ROBERTS' TRANSLATION OF ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS

T-THAT'S ENOUGH!

CAO CAO'S GREED KNOWS NO BOUNDS. HE MUST BE STOPPED!

WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE MATTER?

I SAID THAT'S ENOUGH!

MIGHT I REMIND YOU THAT EVEN EMPEROR GAOZU OF HAN WED HIS BELOVED DAUGHTER TO THE KHAN OF XIONGNU TO SETTLE FOR PEACE. COMPARED TO THAT, YOU WOULD ONLY BE GIVING UP TWO WOMEN WHO AREN'T EVEN NOBLES.

WHY THE SUDDEN CHANGE IN ATTITUDE? SENDING TWO MEASLY WOMEN IS LIKE AN OAK TREE SHEDDING A LEAF. SURELY THERE COULD BE NO BETTER OPTION, NO?

?

THE PROBLEM IS THOSE WOMEN!

WHY I HAD NO IDEA!

IT SEEMS YOU'RE UNAWARE THAT THE OLDER QIAO IS THE LATE SUN CE'S WIFE WHILE THE YOUNGER IS MY OWN WIFE!

I CANNOT FORGIVE THAT ARROGANCE AND CORRUPT GREED OF HIS! AS IF I WOULD EVER GIVE UP MY WIFE AND THE WIFE OF MY LATE LORD!

TO THINK THAT GREEDY BRUTE WOULD BE COMMISSIONING SUCH OUTRAGEOUS POEMS...!

SO BE IT!

THEN I'M AFRAID THAT MEANS WAR, ADMIRAL.

THOSE WEREN'T MY TRUE INTENTIONS!

BUT JUST A MINUTE AGO, YOU SAID...

SO YOU TRULY WISH TO FIGHT...?

I MERELY SAID THAT TO TEST YOUR FEELINGS ON THE MATTER.

INDEED.

THOUGH I CANNOT SAY THE SAME FOR BATTLES ON LAND, WHEN IT COMES TO NAVAL BATTLES, THERE IS NO ONE THAT CAN MATCH MY NAVY!

IF THAT IS YOUR WISH, I SHALL GLADLY COOPERATE.

LET US JOIN HANDS AGAINST OUR COMMON ENEMY CAO CAO.

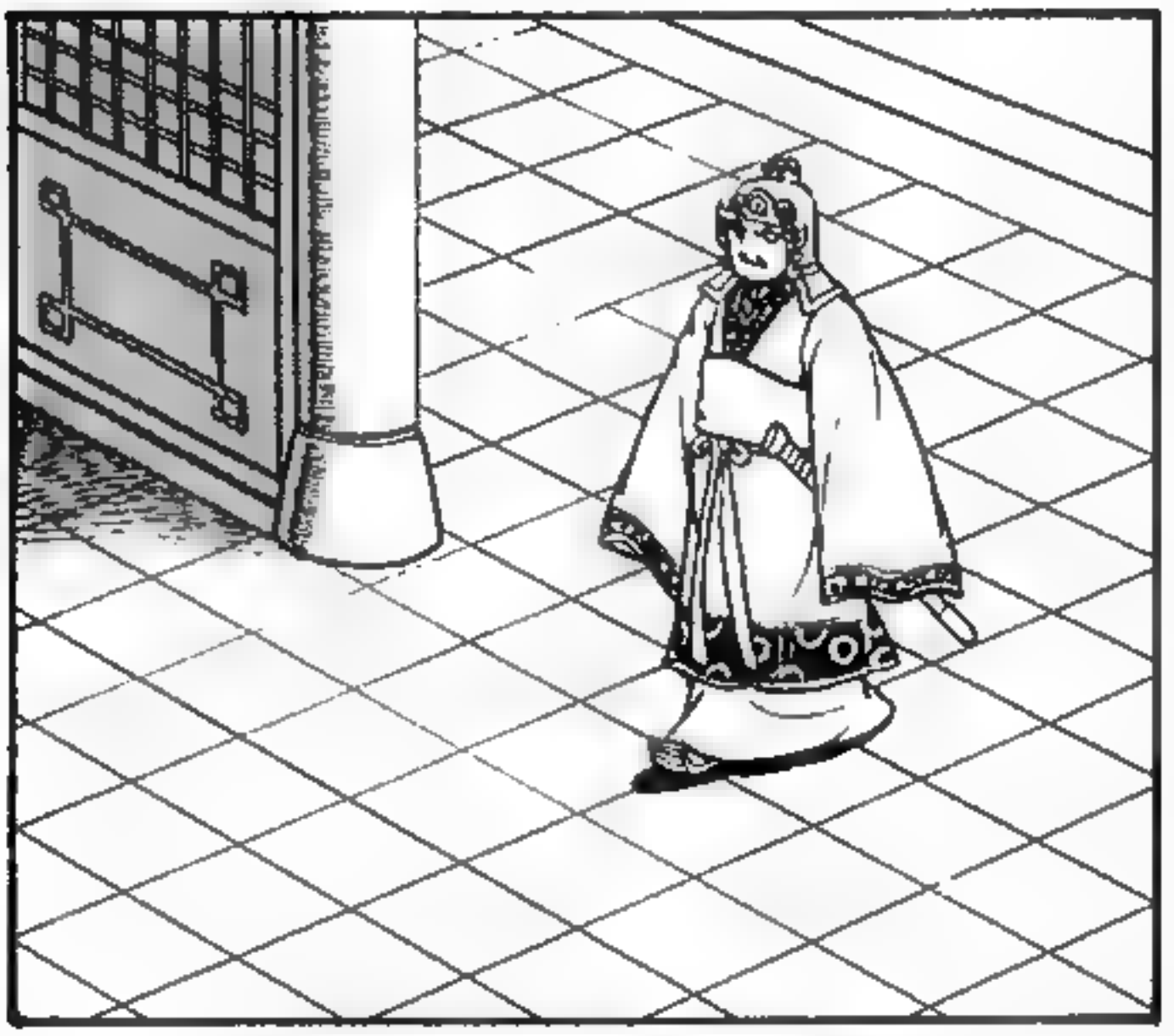
I WILL NOT TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER. THEY WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO OBEY MY ORDERS.

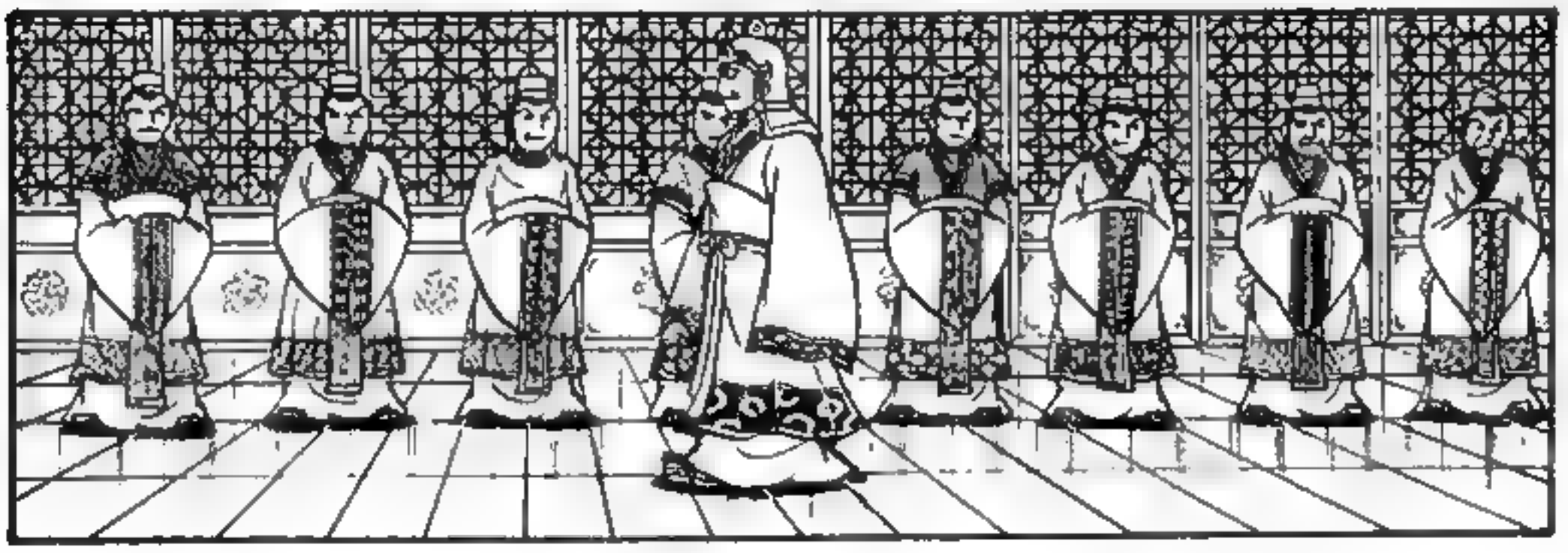
BUT I WONDER IF THE OTHER MEN WILL ACCEPT YOUR DECISION.

THANK YOU, ADMIRAL.

I PROMISE YOU I'LL CONVINCE MY LORD TOMORROW.

# OUTBREAK OF WAR





AH, I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, ZHOU YU.

OUR FORMER DEBATES HAVE BEEN INCONCLUSIVE, WITH ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE COURT DIVIDED ON WHETHER TO FIGHT OR TO SURRENDER. THAT IS WHY I HAVE ASKED TO HEAR YOUR OPINION TODAY.

BEFORE I DO THAT, I'D LIKE TO ASK WHAT THE RESULT OF THE COUNTLESS DEBATES YOU'VE ALREADY HAD ON THIS MATTER WAS.

THE SITUATION IS CRITICAL SO PLEASE TELL ME YOUR HONEST FEELINGS ON THE MATTER.

THE MEN OF ZHANG ZHAO'S FACTION.

AND WHO ARE THE MEN WHO ADVOCATE SURREN-DER?

YES.

ZHANG ZHAO, YOU BELIEVE THE ONLY VALID OPTION IS TO SURRENDER, IS THAT RIGHT?

BUT LAST NIGHT, YOU SAID...

LAST NIGHT WAS LAST NIGHT!

JUST WHY DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD GIVE UP THIS LAND THAT WE HAVE PROUDLY HELD FOR THREE GENERATIONS?

BUT DO YOU REALLY THINK WE STAND ANY CHANCE AGAINST CAO CAO'S MILLION-MAN ARMY?

THE DEBATE RIGHT NOW IS THE REAL THING.

IT HINGES UPON TACTICS, STRATEGY, AND THE SOLDIERS' MORALE. SINCE YOU ARE MERELY A CIVIL OFFICIAL, I DO NOT BLAME YOU FOR NOT KNOWING THIS.

VICTORY ON THE BATTLEFIELD IS NOT DECIDED BY THE NUMBER OF MEN NOR THE SIZE OF SHIPS.

CAO CAO IS A MERE REBEL WHO HAS FORCIBLY SEIZED THE TITLE OF CHANCELLOR FOR HIMSELF. MY LORD, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS THE RESPECTED AND BELOVED RULER OF WU. WE POSSESS DEFENSIBLE LAND, PLENTIFUL SUPPLIES, AND TALENTED GENERALS TO LEAD OUR COURAGEOUS TROOPS.

BUT DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE WE CAN WIN?

YET TO SURRENDER WITHOUT A FIGHT? HOW SHAMEFUL IT IS.

THOUGH CAO CAO HAS DEFEATED YUAN SHAO, THE NORTH HAS YET TO BE COMPLETELY SUBJUGATED FOR MA TENG AND HAN SUI STILL THREATEN CAO CAO'S REAR.

YES, I DO.

HMM...

YES, IT'S AS YOU SAY.

MOREOVER, HIS TROOPS ARE EXPERIENCED ON LAND BUT INEXPERIENCED ON WATER. LASTLY, OUR ENEMIES SHALL BE PRONE TO SICKNESS AND DISEASE CONSIDERING THAT THEY'RE IN FOREIGN LANDS WITH UNFAMILIAR CLIMATES. WITH THIS MANY WEAKNESSES, IT SEEMS MORE THAN LIKELY THAT THEY WILL LOSE REGARDLESS OF HOW MANY THEY NUMBER.

THE ONLY ONE STRONG ENOUGH TO FACE AGAINST CAO CAO PRESENTLY IS I AND I ALONE. I DO NOT WISH TO SURRENDER AND SUFFER THE SAME PITIFUL FATES AS LIU BIAO AND YUAN SHAO HAVE.

YES, I HAVE DECIDED.

THEN YOUR ANSWER IS TO FIGHT...?

YES.

IF MY LORD HAS DECIDED, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE ANY MORE LEST WE LESSEN OUR TROOPS' MORALE.

BEFORE I PUT AN END TO CAO CAO, I MUST PUT AN END TO MY DOUBTS..

YES, MY LORD!

ZHOU YU, I APPOINT YOU AS THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. TAKE THIS SWORD AND LEAD OUR MEN TO VICTORY!

THE MATTER IS HEREBY SETTLED. LET THOSE WHO SPEAK OF SURRENDER SHARE THE SAME FATE AS THIS TABLE'S CORNER!

GENTLEMEN, PREPARE FOR WAR!

AH, SO YOU'VE HEARD?

DEAR, I HEAR YOU'RE GOING TO WAR.

I HEAR CAO CAO'S FORCES NUMBER A MILLION. IT'S ALL SO FRIGHTENING!

YES, BUT THIS IS A FIGHT I CANNOT AVOID IN ORDER TO PROTECT YOU. BUT FEAR NOT, MY BELOVED, FOR I SHALL BE VICTORIOUS.

NOW PUT A REST TO YOUR WORRIES AND GO TO BED.

AH, I SHOULD INFORM KONGMING OF MY LORD'S DECISION.

HMPH, AS IF I'D EVER GIVE UP MY LOVE TO THAT VILE CAO CAO!

YOU CALLED, MASTER?

IS SOMEONE THERE?

YES, GO CALL KONGMING OVER.

GOOD EVENING, ADMIRAL.

THANK YOU FOR COMING.

I ASSUME YOU'VE HEARD BY NOW BUT I WANTED TO PERSONALLY TELL YOU THAT WU HAS DECIDED TO GO TO WAR.

THUS, I'D LIKE TO BEGIN DISCUSSING OUR BATTLE STRATEGY WITH YOU.

MY LORD'S DOUBTS?

I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BEST IF YOU SPOKE WITH YOUR LORD ONE MORE TIME IN ORDER TO LAY ASIDE HIS DOUBTS BEFORE WE DISCUSS ANY STRATEGY.

THEREFORE, I BELIEVE QUELLING HIS FEARS TAKES PRIORITY AT THE *MOMENT*.

I SUSPECT YOUR LORD IS STILL UNEASY AT THE SHEER NUMBER OF *CAO CAO'S* FORCES.

EXCELLENT CHOICE, ADMIRA...

FINE, I SHALL GO SPEAK WITH HIM THEN.

IS THAT SO...

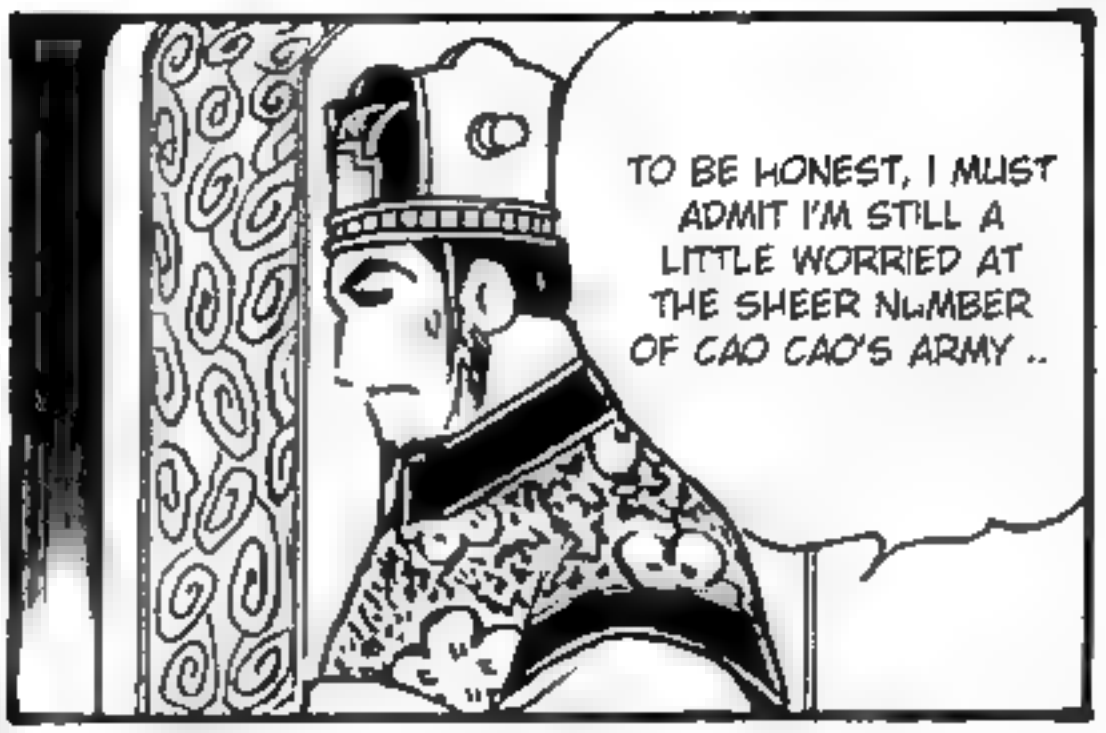
ADMIRAL ZHOU YU WISHES TO MEET WITH YOU, SIR.

.....

SO I WANTED TO RECHECK MY LORD'S WILL TO FIGHT JUST IN CASE.

WELL, OUR TROOPS ARE READY TO MOBILIZE FIRST THING TOMORROW MORNING.
WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE THIS LATE AT NIGHT?

SO IT'S TRUE!


TO BE HONEST, I MUST ADMIT I'M STILL A LITTLE WORRIED AT THE SHEER NUMBER OF CAO CAO'S ARMY ..

THEN YOU HAVE YUAN SHAO'S FORMER SOLDIERS, WHO HAVE LITTLE TRUST NOR LOYALTY TO THEIR NEW GENERALS AND OFFICERS.

PLEASE WORRY NOT, MY LORD. CAO CAO MAY BOAST A MILLION, BUT IN REALITY, HIS CORE OF LOYAL ELITE NORTHERNER TROOPS ONLY NUMBER AROUND 150 OR 160 THOUSAND, OF WHICH MANY ARE MOST LIKELY SICK.

THEY, TOO, ARE DEVOTED VERY LITTLE TO CAO CAO'S CAUSE. I DOUBT THEY'LL BE AN ACTUAL THREAT.

BUT WHAT ABOUT JINGZHOU'S SOLDIERS?

I COULD EASILY DEFEAT OUR ENEMIES WITH ONLY 50,000 SOLDIERS WHILE MY LORD LEADS A RESERVE OF 30,000 FURTHER BACK.

COMPARED TO THEM, EVERY SINGLE SOLDIER OF OUR ARMY ARE BRAVE LOYAL MEN, WILLING TO SACRIFICE THEMSELVES TO PROTECT THEIR HOMELAND.

YES, SO PLEASE DO NOT WORRY ANY MORE.

THANK YOU, ZHOU YU. YOUR WORDS ARE QUITE REASSURING.

IT SEEMS HE COULD SEE THROUGH MY LORD'S HEART BETTER THAN I OR ANYONE ELSE IN WU.

IT'S JUST AS KONGMING SAID.

*LEFT ALONE, HE'S SURE TO BECOME A MAJOR THREAT TO WU IN THE NEAR FUTURE...*

TRULY, WHAT TERRIFYING FORESIGHT AND INTELLECT HE POSSESSES!

THAT NIGHT, ZHOU YU DECIDED HE MUST ASSASSINATE KONGMING SOONER OR LATER.

# KILLING INTENT

THAT MAN CAN READ OUR LORD'S HEART LIKE AN OPEN BOOK. HIS FORESIGHT IS ALMOST TERRIFYING.

IT'S ABOUT KONGMING...

AND WHAT ABOUT KONGMING?

I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BEST TO ELIMINATE KONGMING FROM THE PICTURE...

BUT SINCE OUR LORD'S MIND IS NOW SET...

YES. IF WE DON'T KILL HIM NOW, WHO KNOWS WHAT HE'LL PLAN AGAINST US WHILE WE'RE BUSY FIGHTING CAO CAO.

YOU MEAN... ASSASSINATION!?

WHAT? DO YOU NOT UNDERSTANDING HOW MUCH OF A THREAT KONGMING IS!?

I'M AFRAID I MUST OPPOSE YOUR DECISION.

PERHAPS...

NO, I FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT A TERRIFYINGLY CLEVER MAN HE IS. HOWEVER, TO KILL OUR MOST TALENTED ALLY BEFORE WE'VE YET TO KILL EVEN A SINGLE ENEMY SOLDIER WOULD LEAD US TO HUMILIATION AND RUIN.

HMM, THAT'S NOT A BAD IDEA.

WHY NOT ASK HIS BROTHER ZHUGE JIN TO CONVINCE HIM TO SERVE WU INSTEAD?

YES, THAT WOULD BE BEST.

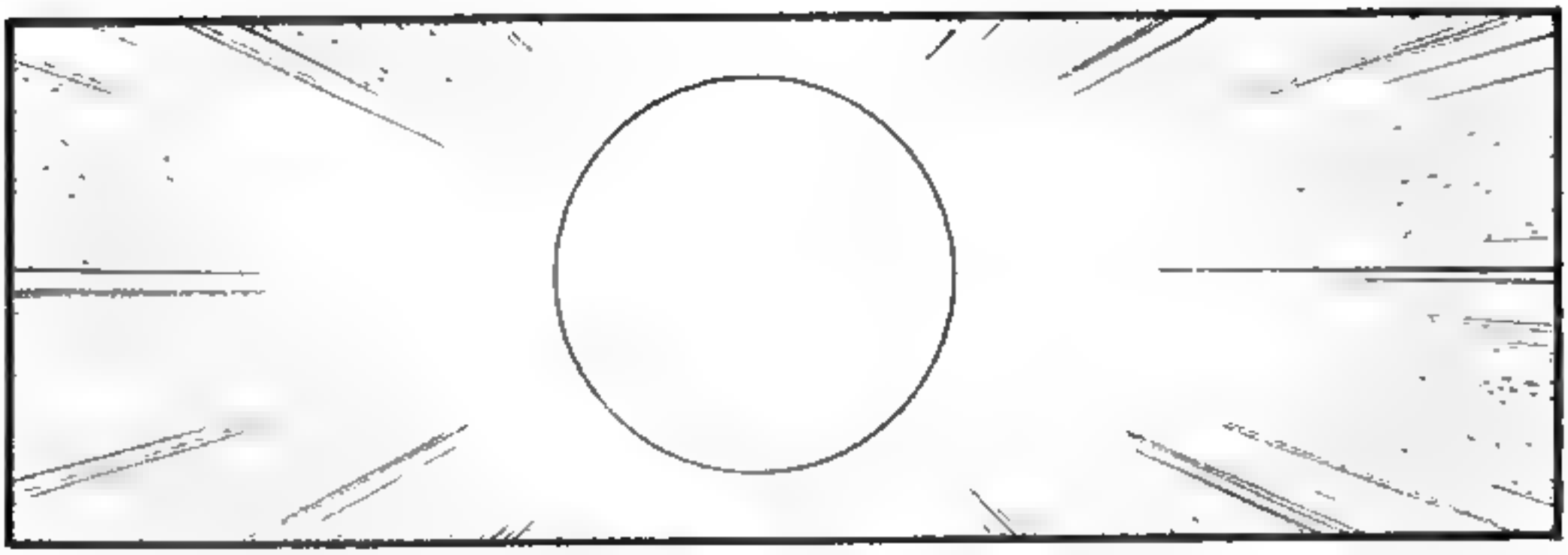
WELL, THE SOONER THE BETTER, AS THEY SAY. I SHALL HAVE ZHUGE JIN TALK TO KONGMING TOMORROW THEN.

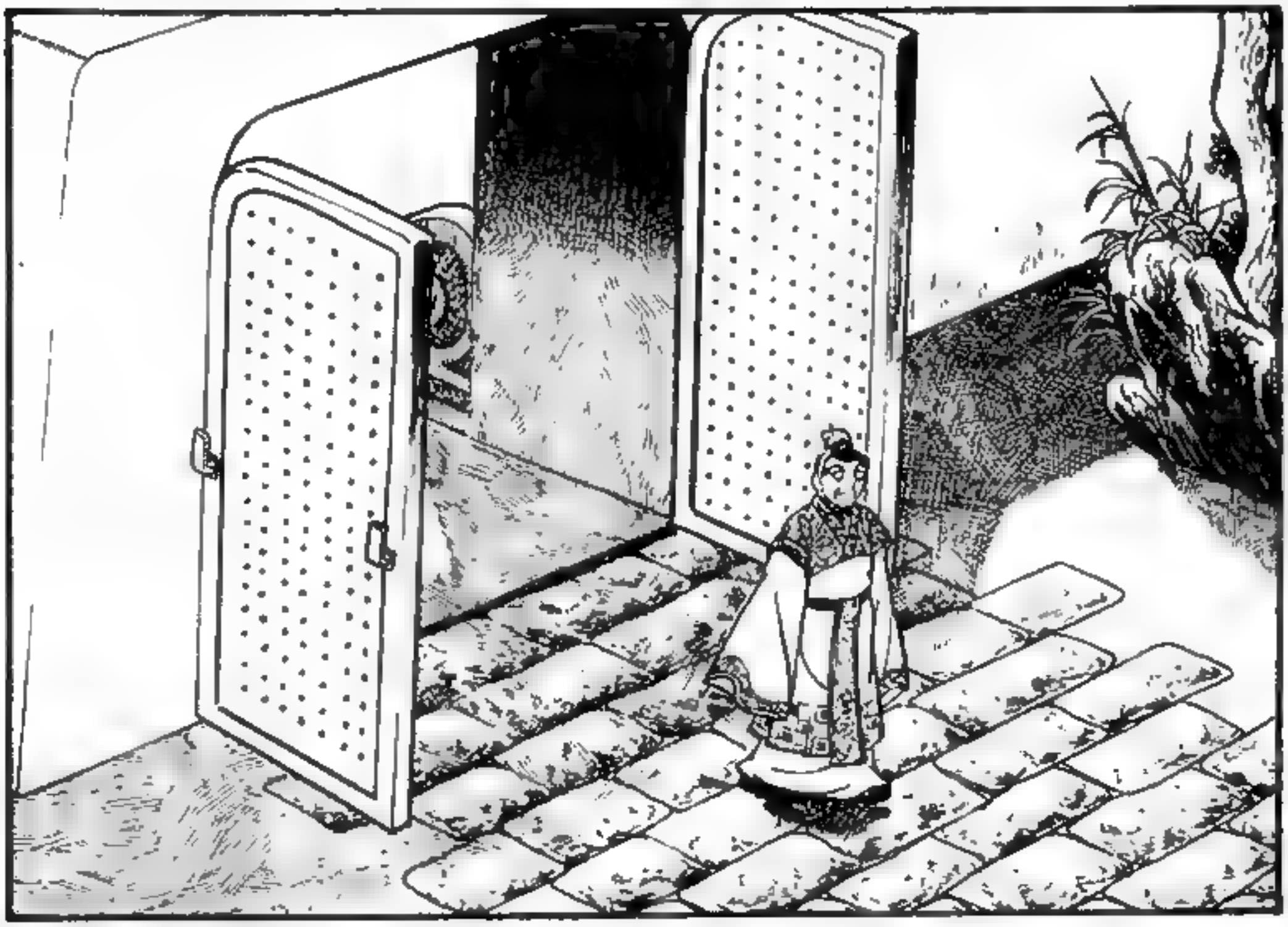
YES, MASTER?

SERVANT!

YES, MASTER.

GO TELL ZHUGE JIN TO MEET WITH ME AT ONCE.





YES, PLEASE WAIT RIGHT HERE...

COULD YOU GO IN AND TELL KONGMING THAT HIS BROTHER HAS COME TO VISIT HIM?

PLEASE, COME INSIDE.

AH, BROTHER.

NO, FORGIVE ME. I WAS JUST AS BUSY AS WELL.

FORGIVE ME FOR FAILING TO GIVE YOU A PROPER GREETING DUE TO BUSINESS LAST TIME.

YOU TOO AS WELL, BROTHER.

YOU'VE TRULY GROWN INTO A WONDERFUL MAN SINCE THEN.

HOW MANY YEARS HAS IT BEEN SINCE WE LAST MET?

BY THE WAY, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE TWO BROTHERS, BO YI AND YU QI WHO LIVED DURING THE LAST YEARS OF THE SHANG DYNASTY?

ALTHOUGH THEIR FATHER NAMED SHU QI AS THE HEIR, SHU QI POLITELY DECLINED SAYING IT WAS ONLY PROPER FOR BO YI, AS THE OLDER BROTHER, TO BE THE NEXT LORD OF GUZHU.

THE TWO BROTHERS SAID IT WAS IMMORAL TO WAGE WAR AGAINST THE RULING SHANG DYNASTY, ESPECIALLY SO SOON AFTER KING WEN'S DEATH. DESPITE THEIR OBJECTIONS, KING WU WENT AHEAD AND OVERTHREW THE SHANG DYNASTY TO ESTABLISH THE NEW ZHOU DYNASTY.

BO QI, IN TURN, DECLINED SAYING IT WAS IMPROPER TO DISRESPECT THEIR FATHER'S WISH. UNWILLING TO YIELD TO THE OTHER, BOTH BROTHERS ENDED UP LEAVING GUZHU TO BECOME RETAINERS OF KING WEN OF ZHOU INSTEAD. UNFORTUNATELY, WEN HAD ALREADY PASSED AWAY WHEN THE BROTHERS CAME AND THE NEW KING WU OF ZHOU WAS IN THE MIDST OF PREPARING A REBELLION AGAINST THE CORRUPT EMPEROR ZHOU OF SHANG

ARE YOU NOT A LITTLE EMBARRASED AT OUR RELATIONSHIP COMPARED TO THAT OF BO YI AND SHU QI?

WE ARE BORN FROM THE SAME MOTHER, YET WE SERVE DIFFERENT LORDS.

THE TWO BROTHERS THEN REFUSED TO EAT ANYTHING GROWN FROM THE LANDS OF ZHOU FOR CONSCIENTIOUS REASONS AND SOON STARVED TO DEATH.

WHICH DO YOU THINK IS MORE IMPORTANT? LOVE OR LOYALTY?

NOT QUITE, BROTHER. YOUR STORY SPEAKS OF BROTHERLY LOVE BUT IT ALSO SPEAKS OF LOYALTY.

YOU AND I ARE BOTH SERVANTS OF HAN FIRST AND FOREMOST. LIU BEI, AS THE DESCENDANT OF EMPEROR JING OF HAN, IS THE RIGHTFUL LORD YOU MUST SERVE IF YOU ARE TO DO YOUR DUTY AS A LOYAL SERVANT OF HAN.

LOYALTY. BUT OF COURSE, THAT DOES NOT MEAN ONE CAN IGNORE LOVE.

MOREOVER, THE GRAVES OF OUR PARENTS DO NOT LIE HERE IN THE SOUTHLAND, BUT NORTH OF THE GREAT RIVER. THUS, BY LEAVING WU AND JOINING ME IN SERVING LIU BEI, WE SHALL BE ABLE TO FULFILL BOTH LOVE AND LOYALTY. I DARESAY THE ZHUGE BROTHERS WILL THEN NOT BE INFERIOR TO THE ADMIRABLE BO YI AND SHU QI.

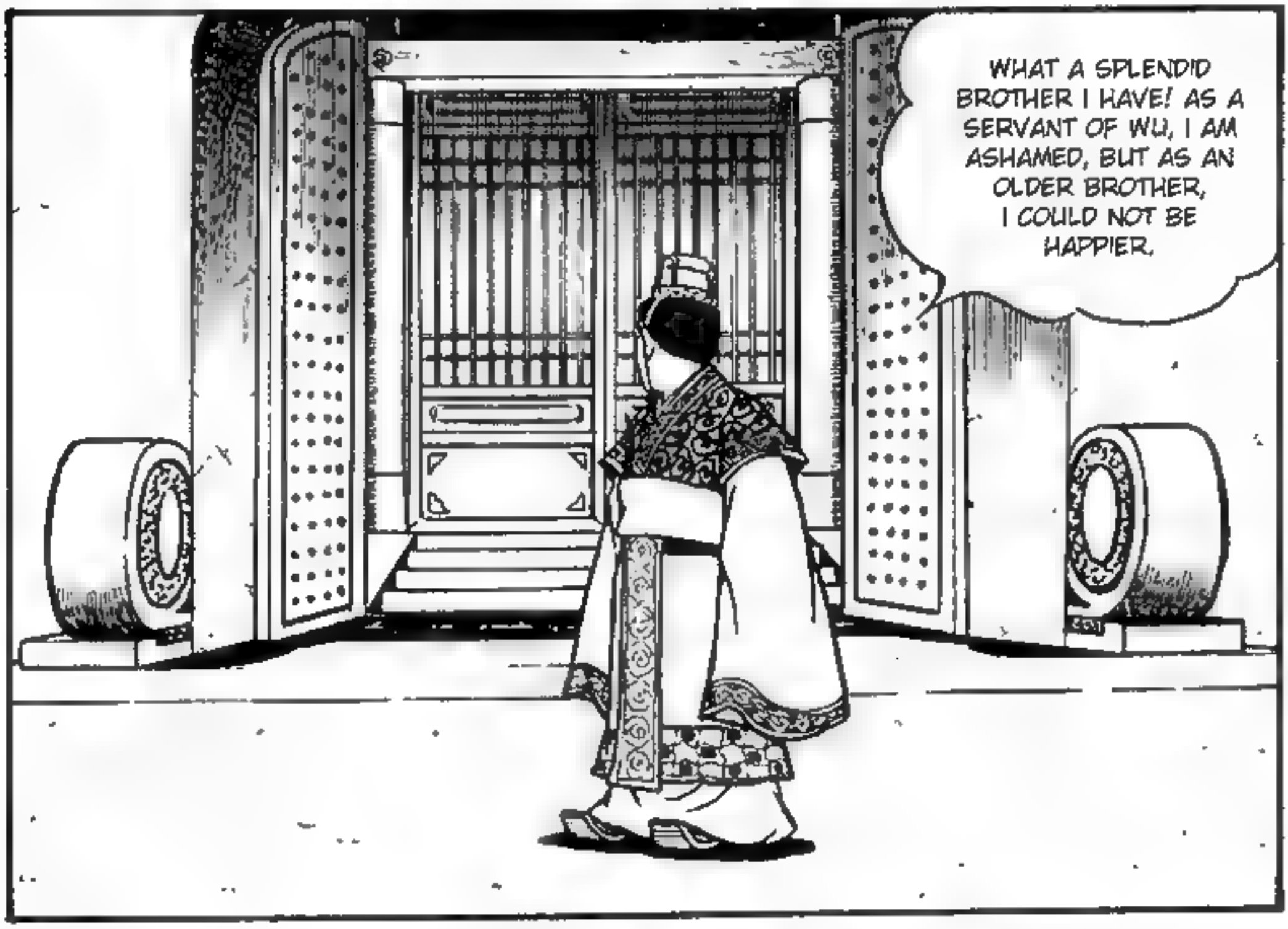
CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

UMM...

YES, EXCUSE ME THEN.

ISN'T THAT THE SIGNAL FOR MOBILIZATION? I BELIEVE YOU SHOULD BE GOING NOW, BROTHER. NO NEED TO MIND ME.

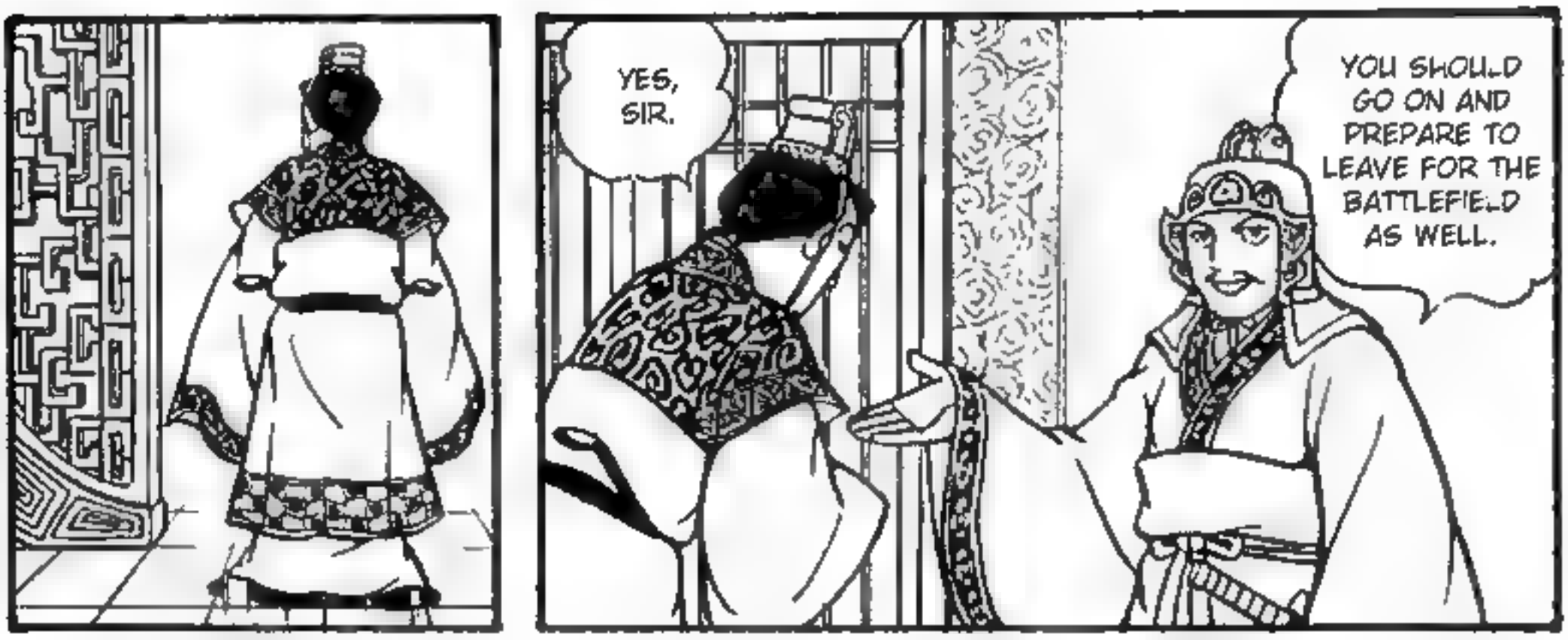
UNTIL NEXT TIME THEN, MY LITTLE BROTHER.

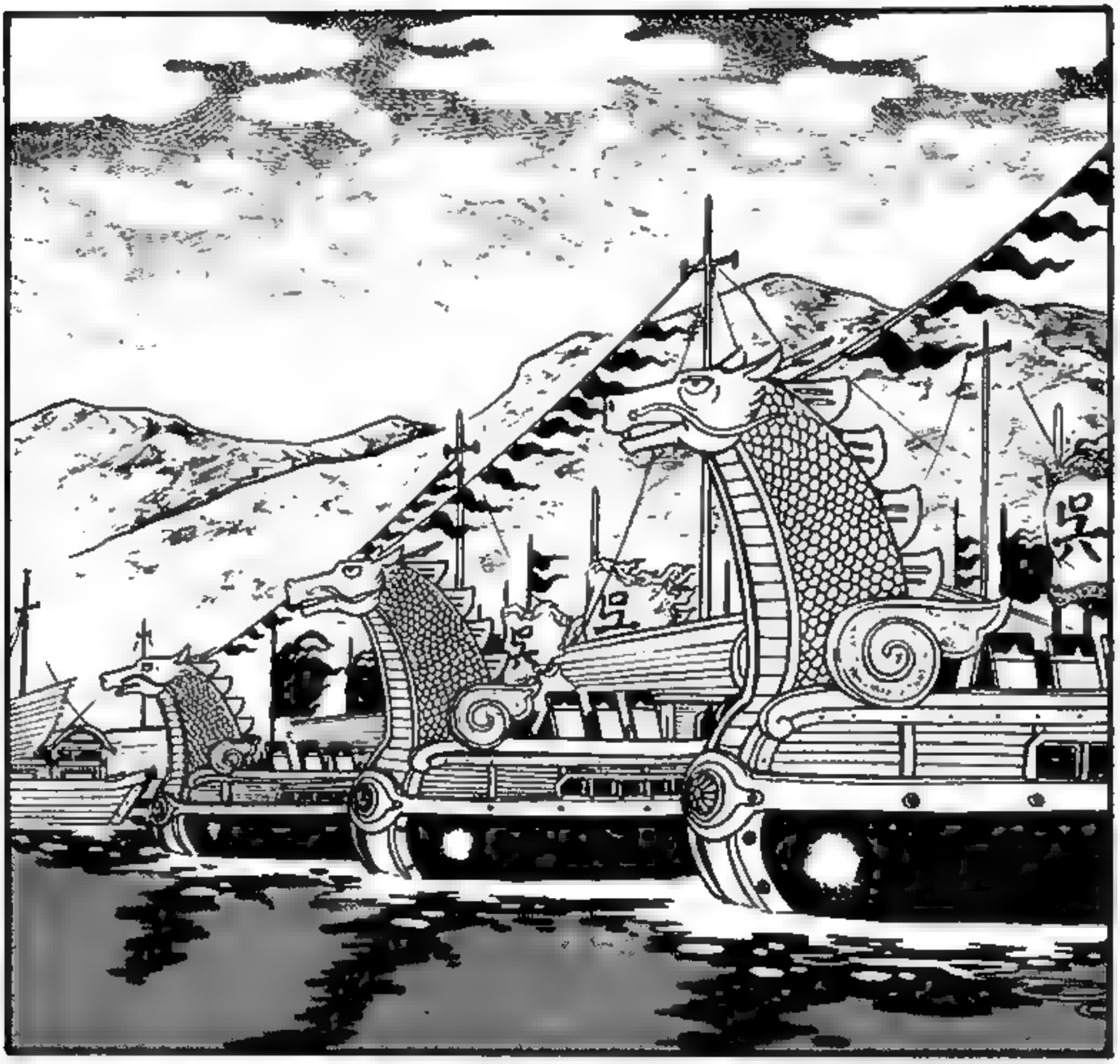

WHAT A SPLENDID BROTHER I HAVE! AS A SERVANT OF WU, I AM ASHAMED, BUT AS AN OLDER BROTHER, I COULD NOT BE HAPPIER.

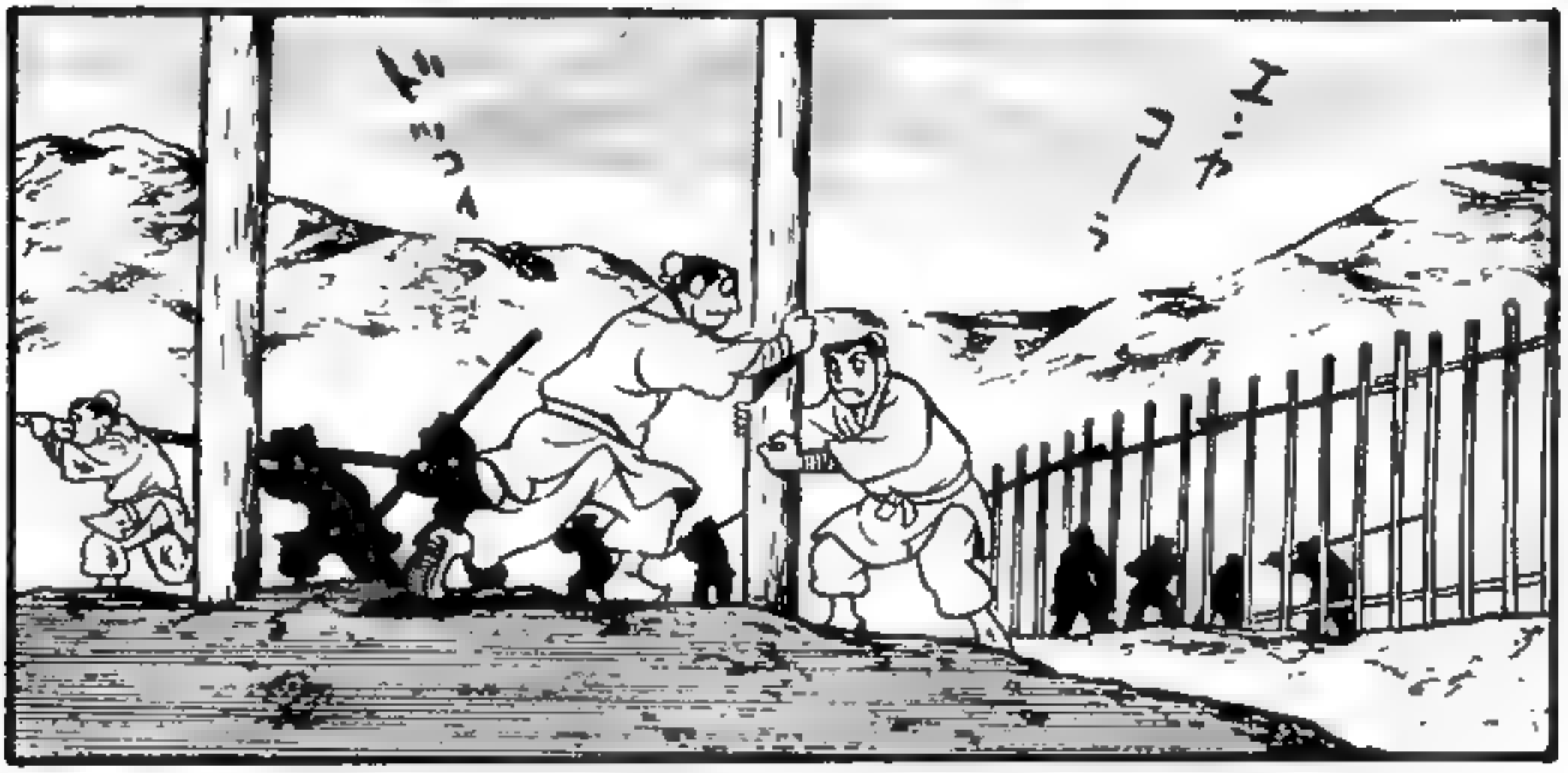
THEN WILL YOU GO SERVE LIU BEI AS YOUR BROTHER SUGGESTED?

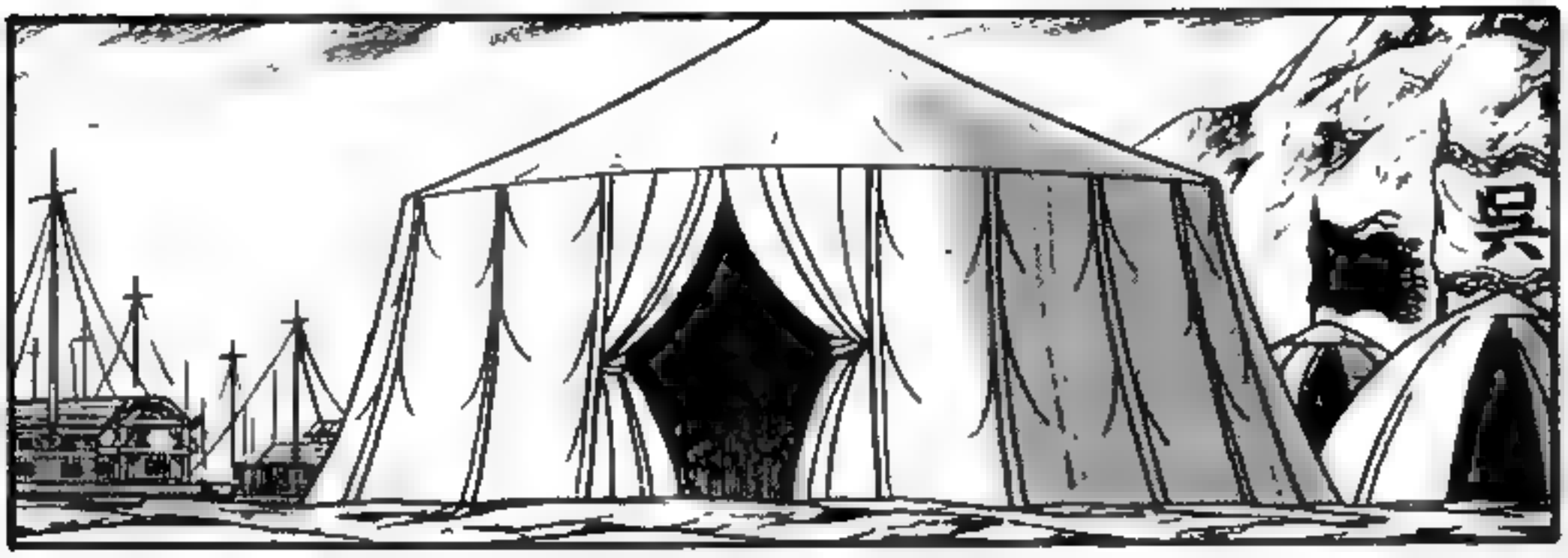
IN A WAY, YES.
WHAT!? HE REFUSED!?

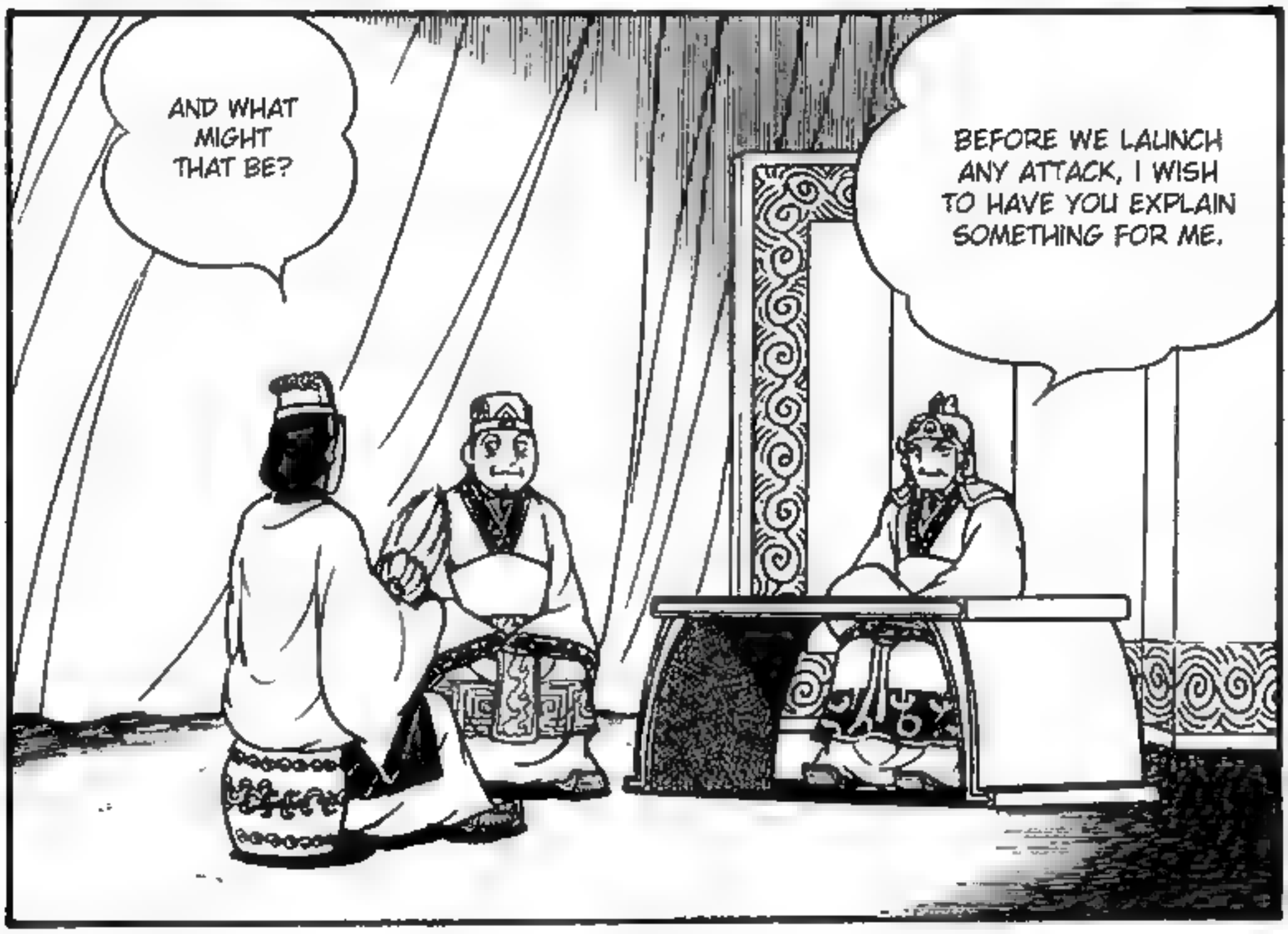
IT WAS MERELY A JEST MADE IN BAD TASTE. FORGIVE ME.
WHY, I'M QUITE OFFENDED TO HEAR SUCH WORDS THAT DOUBT MY LOYALTY TO WU!


YES, SIR.
YOU SHOULD GO ON AND PREPARE TO LEAVE FOR THE BATTLEFIELD AS WELL.
NOW I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO COME UP WITH AN UNSUSPICIOUS WAY TO ELIMINATE KONGMING...








AND WHAT MIGHT THAT BE?
BEFORE WE LAUNCH ANY ATTACK, I WISH TO HAVE YOU EXPLAIN SOMETHING FOR ME.

I CANNOT SAY I AM AN EXPERT ON THAT TOPIC BUT PLEASE ASK AWAY.

IT IS ABOUT CAO CAO AND YUAN SHAO'S BATTLE AT GUANDU.

AH WELL, CAO CAO AND YUAN SHAO HAD MANY DIFFERENCES IN THEIR LEADERSHIP, BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR TO CAO CAO'S SUCCESS IS MOST LIKELY THE RAID ON WUCHAO, THE FOOD SUPPLY DEPOT OF YUAN SHAO'S ARMY.

YUAN SHAO, DESPITE VASTLY OUTNUMBERING CAO CAO'S FORCES, WAS UTTERLY TROUNCED AT THE BATTLE OF GUANDU. PLEASE TELL ME HOW CAO CAO MANAGED TO ACCOMPLISH THIS.

RIGHT NOW, WE ARE IN A SIMILAR SITUATION AS CAO CAO ONCE WAS.

I SEE. AS EXPECTED, YOU ALSO THOUGHT THE ATTACK ON THE FOOD SUPPLIES WAS THE CHIEF REASON.

AND HAVE YOU FOUND OUT WHERE THAT MIGHT BE, ADMIRAL?

THUS, I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BEST TO CUT OFF CAO CAO'S MILLION SOLDIERS FROM THEIR FOOD SUPPLIES.

ACCORDING TO MY SPIES, IT IS AT IRON PILE MOUNTAIN.

YES, AS A MATTER OF FACT.

THUS, I KINDLY ASK YOU TO LAUNCH A NIGHT RAID ON IT. I SHALL LEND YOU A THOUSAND CAVALRY FOR THE TASK.

SINCE YOU'VE LIVED IN JINGZHOU FOR A LONG TIME, I ASSUME YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH ITS TOPOGRAPHY, YES?

WELL, WHAT DO YOU SAY? I DARESAY YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE TALENTED ENOUGH TO PULL THIS OFF.

*AH, SO HE INTENDS TO KILL ME INDIRECTLY BY USING CAO CAO'S ARMY...*

I SHALL GO PREPARE FOR THE NIGHT RAID THEN.

AS YOU WISH.

WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE MATTER?

P-PLEASE HOLD ON, KONGMING!

HAHAHA, WHY ON EARTH WOULD I ACCEPT IF I DIDN'T THINK I COULD WIN?

IT IS ABOUT THE MISSION YOU JUST ACCEPTED. DID YOU ACCEPT BECAUSE YOU ARE CONFIDENT IN YOUR SUCCESS, OR BECAUSE YOU COULD NOT DARE TO REFUSE?

HAHAHA. THAT MAY BE SO, BUT THIS IS AN EASY TASK FOR ME. FOR YOU SEE, I AM FAR MORE TALENTED THAN YOU MEN.

BUT A MAN AS CLEVER AS CAO CAO WOULD BE SURE TO GUARD HIS SUPPLY DEPOT WITH THE UTMOST CARE.

YOU ARE SKILLED ONLY AT FIGHTING ON LAND, WHILE ZHOU YU IS SKILLED ONLY AT FIGHTING ON WATER.

IN ONLY ONE DIRECTION?

I RECOGNIZE THAT ZHOU YU IS A CAPABLE ADMIRAL AND YOU, LU SU, ARE A CAPABLE GNERAL. BUT YOU MEN ARE CAPABLE IN ONLY ONE DIRECTION.

DON'T YOU THINK YOUR WORDS ARE A LITTLE TOO HARSH?

YOU CAN CLEARLY TELL ZHOU YU IS CLUELESS WHEN IT COMES TO LAND BATTLES FROM THE RIDICULOUS MISSION HE ASKED OF ME.

IF I WERE TO DIE DURING THE RAID, ZHOU YU WOULD SURELY BECOME THE WORLD'S LAUGHINGSTOCK FOR BEING SO IGNORANT ABOUT WAR ON LAND.

NOT AT ALL. A PERSON WHO KNEW THE SLIGHTEST THING ABOUT LAND BATTLES WOULD DARE NOT THINK OF RAIDING A TIGHTLY GUARDED FOOD SUPPLY DEPOT WITH ONLY A THOUSAND CAVALRY.

BUT LUCKILY FOR ZHOU YU'S REPUTATION, I HAVE NO INTENTION OF DYING. HAHAHA!

Y-YES, BASICALLY...

KONGMING CALLED ME AN INCOMPETENT GENERAL!?

WHAT!?

I SHALL MAKE HIM EAT HIS OWN WORDS...

HOW DARE HE CALL ZHOU YU, WHO LEADS WU'S ENTIRE ARMED FORCES, INCOMPETENT!

TELL KONGMING HE NEED NOT GO FOR I SHALL LEAD 5000 SOLDIERS AND BURN DOWN CAO CAO'S SUPPLY DEPOT! THAT'LL TEACH HIM TO DISRESPECT ME!

WHETHER IT BE 5000 SOLDIERS OR MORE, THEY'LL SURELY BE DECIMATED BY CAO CAO'S FORCES.

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WHAT!? ZHOU YU HAS DECIDED TO GO HIMSELF WITH 5000 SOLDIERS? AHAHAHA!

IF THE FORCES OF WU AND MY LORD TRULY COOPERATE TOGETHER, WE CAN EASILY DEFEAT CAO CAO'S FORCES.

ZHOU YU IS ONE OF WU'S MOST TALENTED MEN. WE CANNOT CARELESSLY HAVE HIM KILLED IN BATTLE.

I BELIEVE OPENING THIS WAR WITH AN ATTACK ON LAND IS TO OUR DISADVANTAGE. WE MUST BREAK THE ENEMY'S MORALE WITH A DECISIVE NAVAL BATTLE.

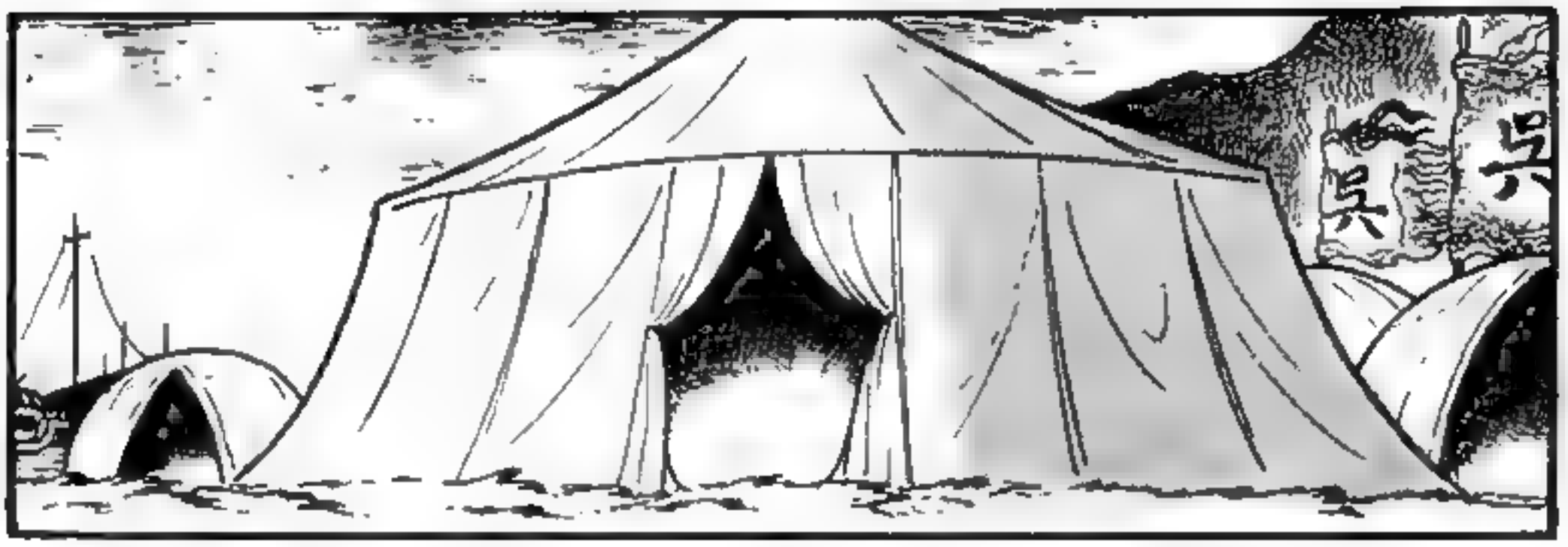
SO LET US STOP THIS LITTLE GAME OF DISTRUST AND BETRAYAL, FOR IT WOULD ONLY GIVE CAO CAO THE UPPER HAND.

YES, I WAS THINKING THE SAME MYSELF.

ONLY AFTER THAT, WILL WE COME UP WITH A WAY TO DEFEAT THEM ON LAND AS WELL.

YES, THANK YOU, LU SU.

I SHALL INFORM ZHOU YU EXACTLY WHAT YOU HAVE JUST TOLD ME. THAT MAN IS STILL A LITTLE TOO HOT-HEADED FOR HIS OWN GOOD.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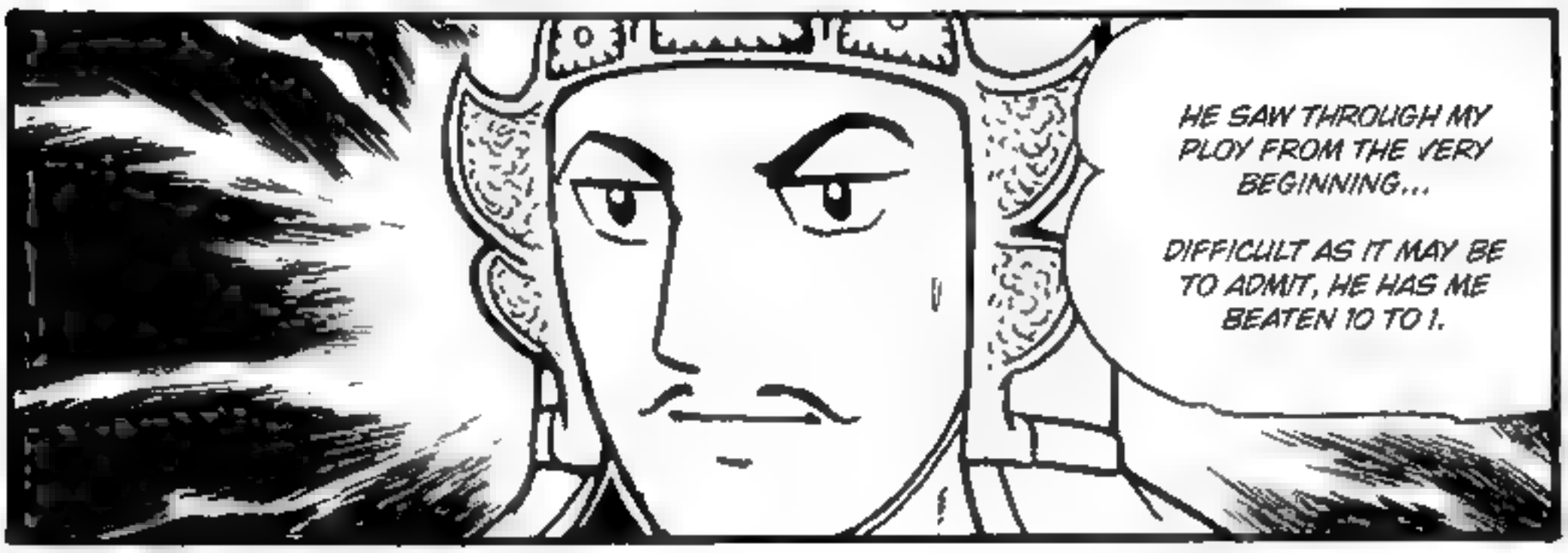
YES, AND I AGREE WITH HIS WORDS. SO PLEASE ADMIRAL, I BEG OF YOU TO ABANDON YOUR IDEA OF RAIDING THE SUPPLY DEPOT.

WHAT!? KONGMING SAID THAT JUST NOW TO YOU!?

NGHH...


HE SAW THROUGH MY PLOY FROM THE VERY BEGINNING...
DIFFICULT AS IT MAY BE TO ADMIT, HE HAS ME BEATEN 10 TO 1.

WELL, ADMIRAL?

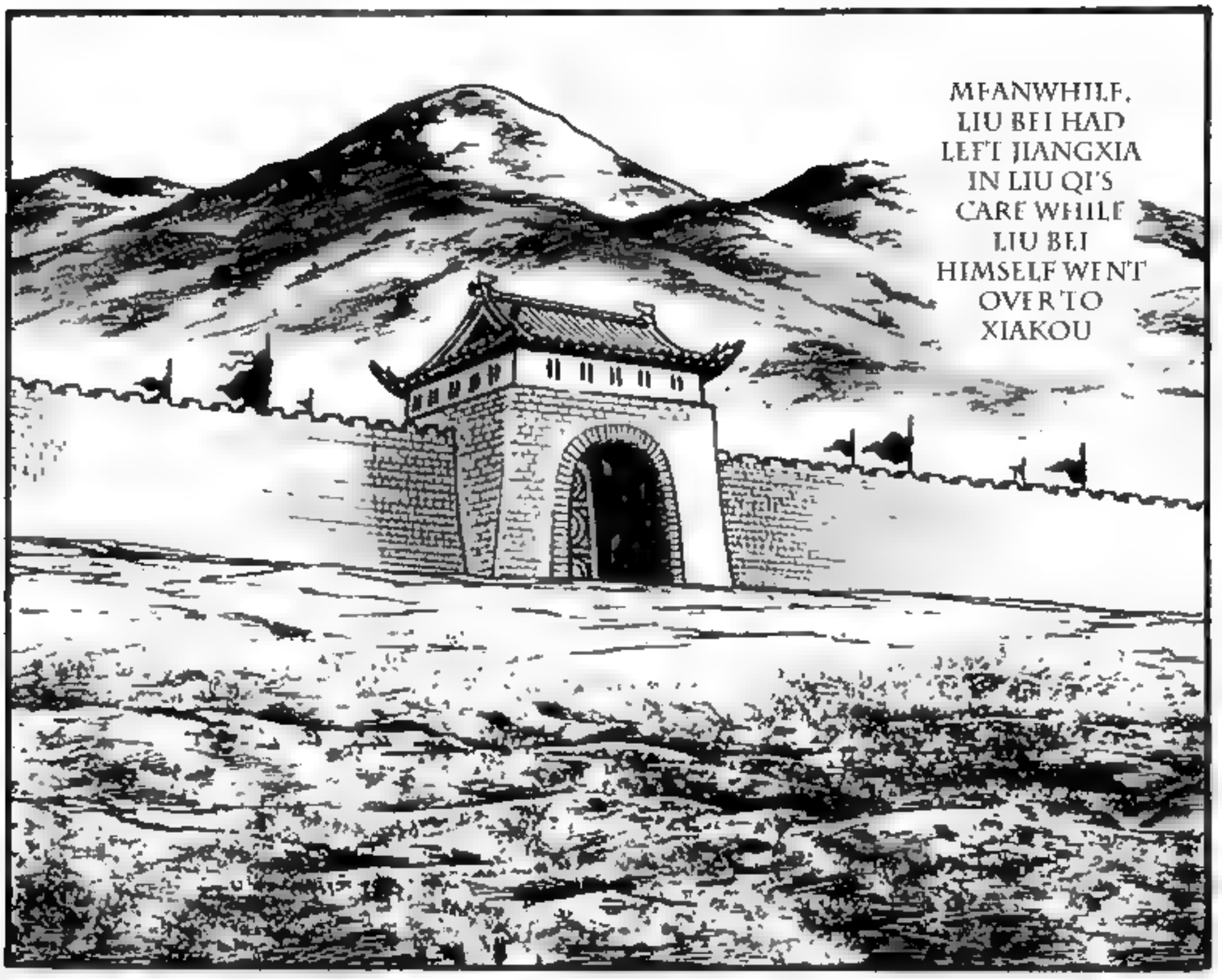
*IF HE BECOMES WU'S ENEMY IN THE DISTANT FUTURE, THERE SHALL BE NO STOPPING HIM...*

A WISE CHOICE, INDEED.

FINE, I SHALL CANCEL THE RAID.

BUT REMEMBER THIS, LU SU. KONGMING ***MUST BE*** KILLED.

# ASSASSINATION PLOT



JUST WHY HAS THERE BEEN NO NEWS FROM HIM...?

IF HE FAILS, THEN WE'LL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO FACE THE REST OF HAN CHINA AS OUR FOES.

LORD LIU.

THEN THEY INTEND TO FIGHT CAO CAO?

WHAT!?

WE'VE RECEIVED REPORTS OF WU'S FLEET MAKING ITS WAY UP THE RIVER.

MOST LIKELY, SIR.

YOU DID IT, KONGMING!

MOREOVER, CAO CAO'S FLEET IS ALSO HEADING SOUTH, AS IF TO MEET THEM HEAD ON.

THIS IS QUITE WORRI-SOME.

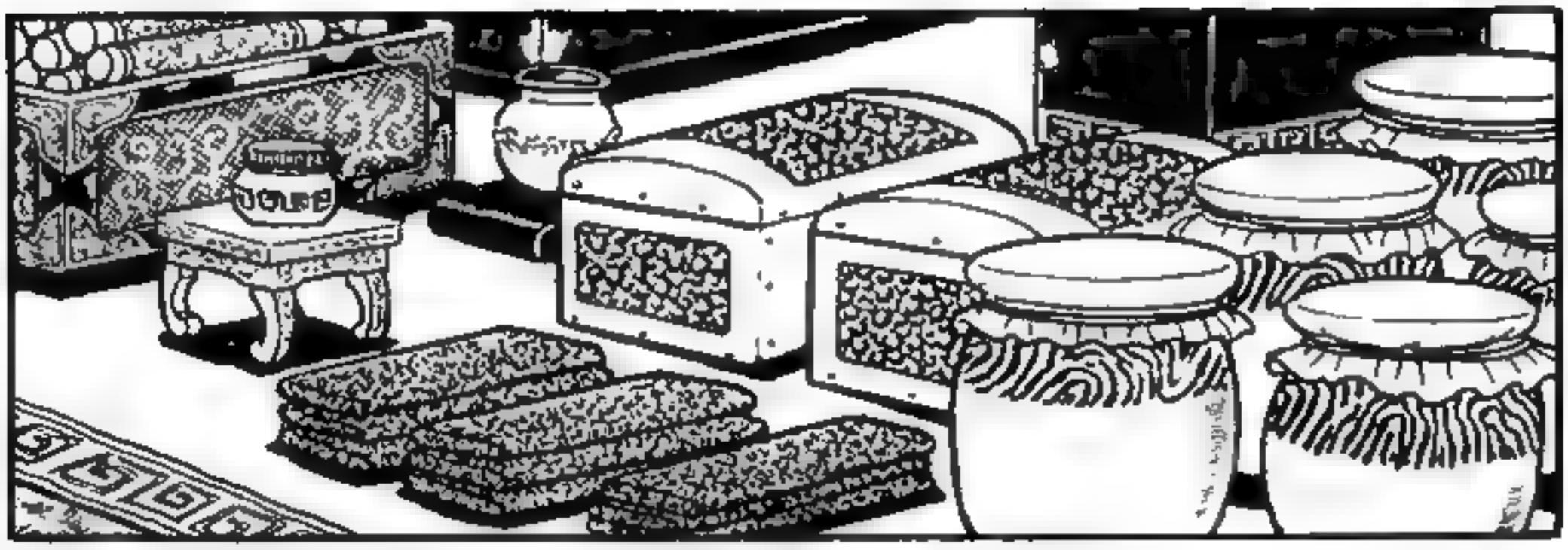
BUT IF KONGMING MANAGED TO CONVINCE WU, THEN WHY HAVEN'T WE HEARD ANYTHING FROM HIM YET...?

PERHAPS SOMETHING UNEXPECTED HAPPENED TO HIM...?

WILL YOU, MI ZHU?

ALLOW ME TO GO AND FIND OUT, MY LORD.

CARRYING WINE AND OTHER GIFTS FOR WU'S ARMY, MI ZHU SET SAIL TO WU'S ENCAMPMENTS IN ORDER TO ASCERTAIN WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO ZHUGE LIANG



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THANK YOU FOR COMING TO GIVE OUR ARMY LORD LIU'S BLESSINGS.

PLEASE, COME INSIDE AND HAVE A DRINK WITH ME.

NO, NOT AT ALL. THIS IS MORE THAN LAVISH ENOUGH FOR ME.

FORGIVE ME FOR NOT TREATING YOU TO ANY BETTER FOOD. THIS IS AN ARMY ENCAMPMENT, AFTER ALL.

BUT HE'S TOO BUSY PLANNING MANY THINGS AT THE MOMENT.

YES, OF COURSE.

BY THE WAY, MY LORD'S ADVISOR KONGMING SHOULD BE HERE, RIGHT?

IS THAT SO?

YES, AND I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BEST FOR YOUR LORD LIU BEI TO COME VISIT ME HERE, SO WE CAN ALL PLAN OUR BATTLE STRATEGY TOGETHER. WHAT DO YOU SAY?

YES, THANK YOU. I BELIEVE THAT WOULD BE THE BEST FOR BOTH OF OUR SIDES.

WELL, THAT WILL BE UP TO MY LORD TO DECIDE BUT I SHALL GO ASK HIM.

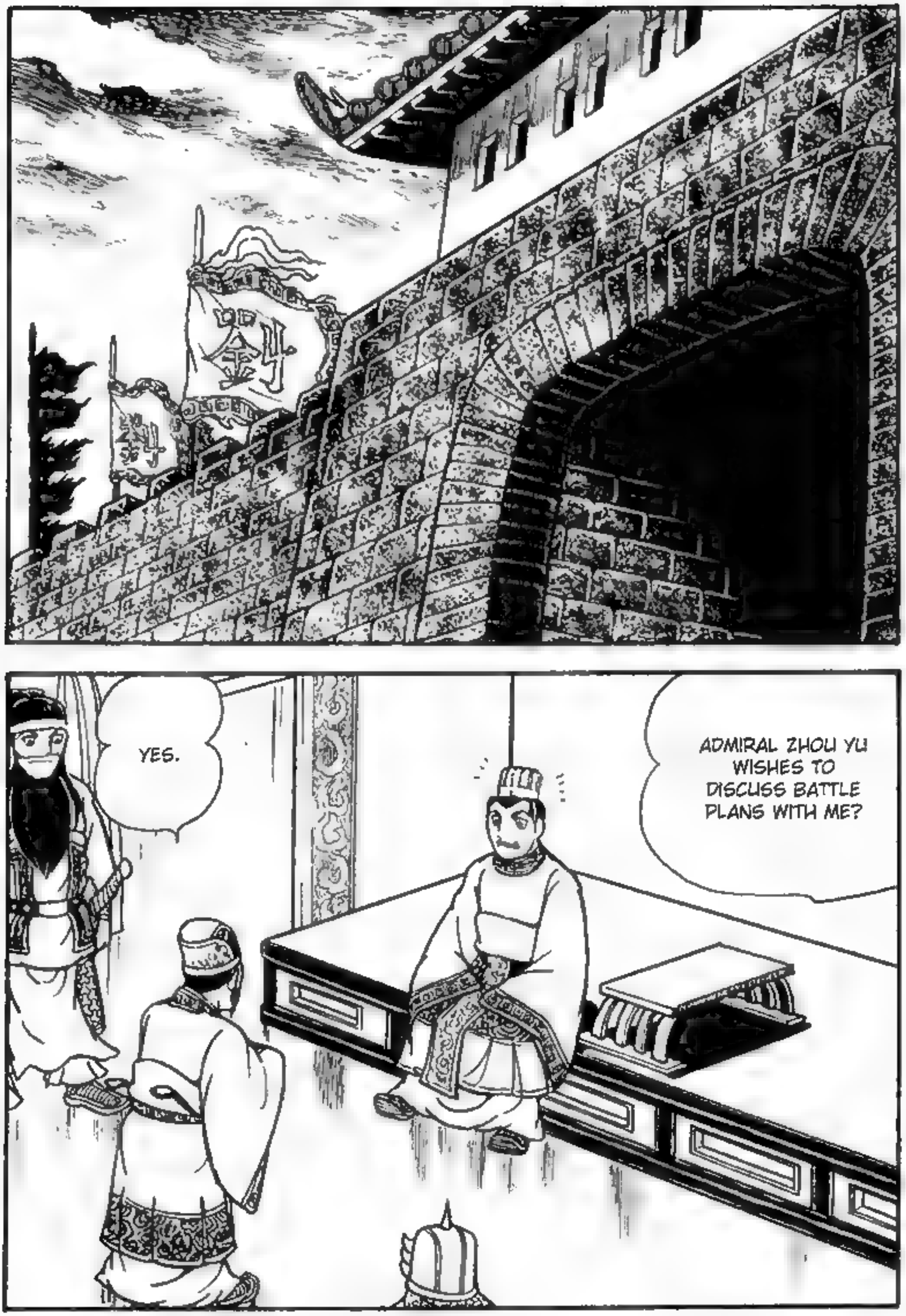
THANK YOU FOR VISITING.

PLEASE EXCUSE ME THEN.

*HOW STRANGE. IT ALMOST SEEMED AS IF HE DIDN'T WANT TO LET ME SEE KONGMING...*

WHY DID YOU ASK LIU BEI TO COME, ADMIRAL?

ISN'T THAT OBVIOUS? IT'LL BE THE PERFECT CHANCE TO ELIMINATE BOTH LIU BEI AND KONGMING.


YES.
ADMIRAL ZHOU YU WISHES TO DISCUSS BATTLE PLANS WITH ME?

FINE, I SHALL GO SEE HIM.

HMM...

I BELIEVE THAT'S A DANGEROUS CHOICE, MY LORD.

WHAT?

NO.

IF IT'S BATTLE PLANS HE WANTS TO DISCUSS, IT CAN BE DONE BY LETTERS.

I AGREE. WITH THE WAY ZHOU YU HAD NO INTENTION OF LETTING ME SEE KONGMING, IT'S CLEAR THERE'S SOMETHING SUSPICIOUS GOING ON.

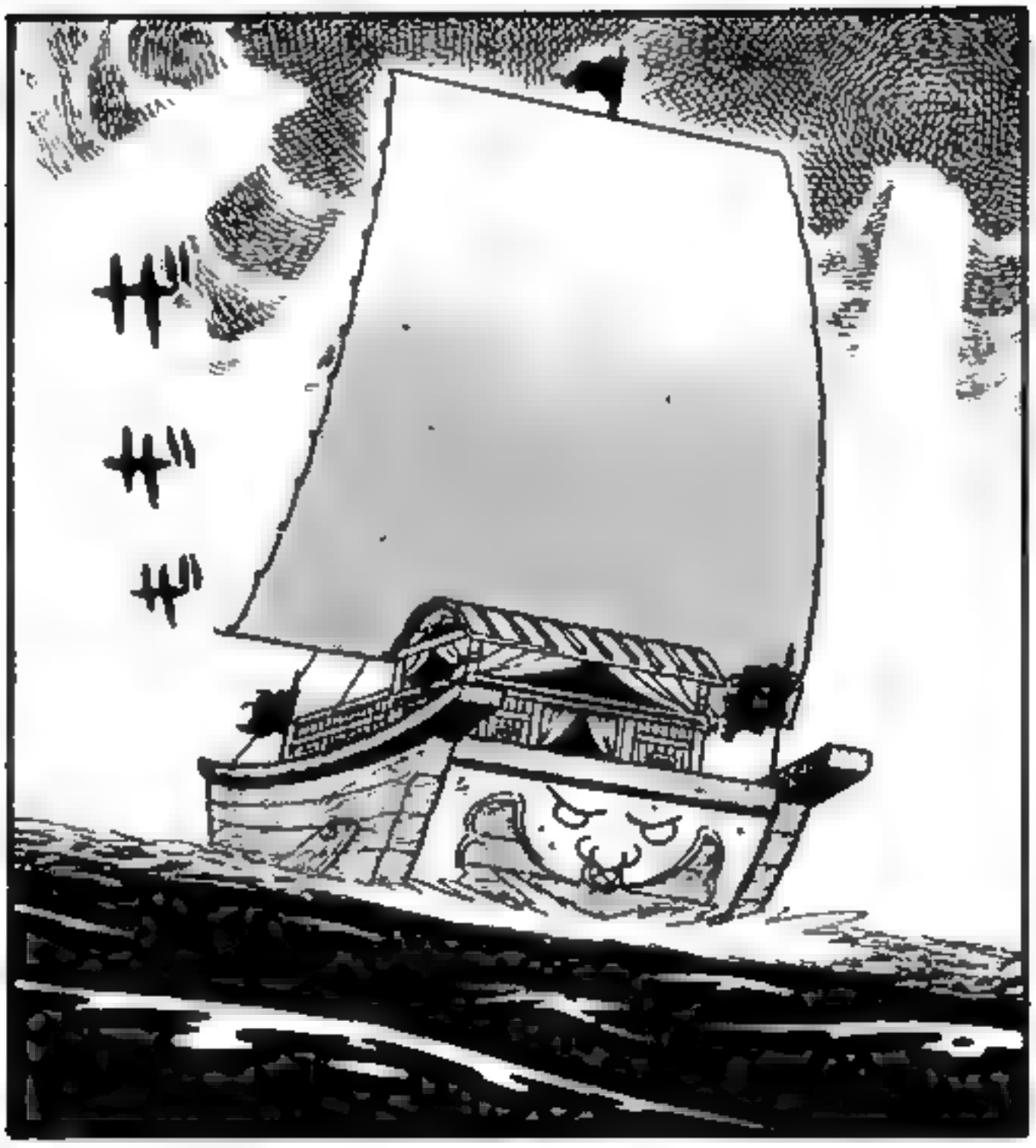
KONGMING GAVE HIS ALL IN FORGING THIS NEW, BUT FRAGILE, ALLIANCE. WE MUST SHOW WU THAT THEY HAVE OUR FULL SUPPORT AND TRUST.

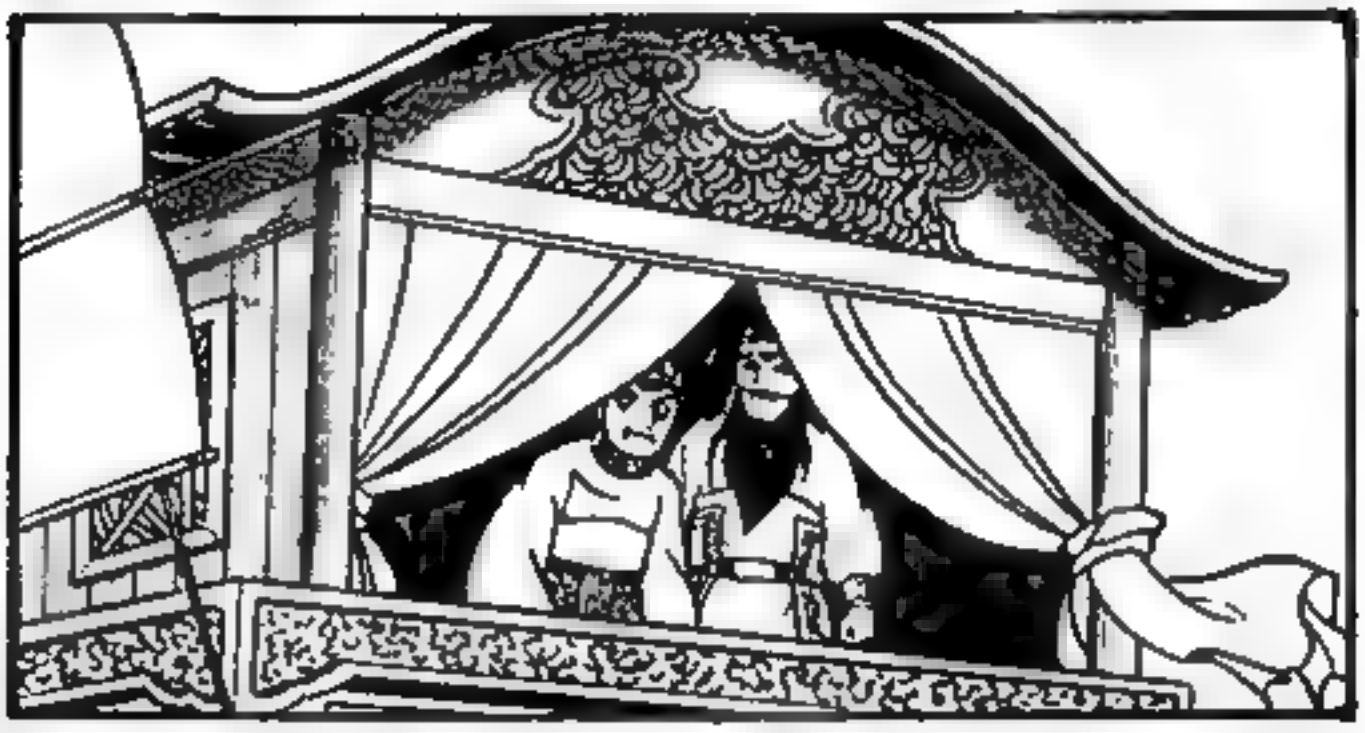
AS FOR YOU, GUAN YU, PLEASE COME ALONG WITH ME.

ZHANG FEI, ZHAO ZILONG. I WANT YOU TO GUARD THE CASTLE WHILE I'M GONE.

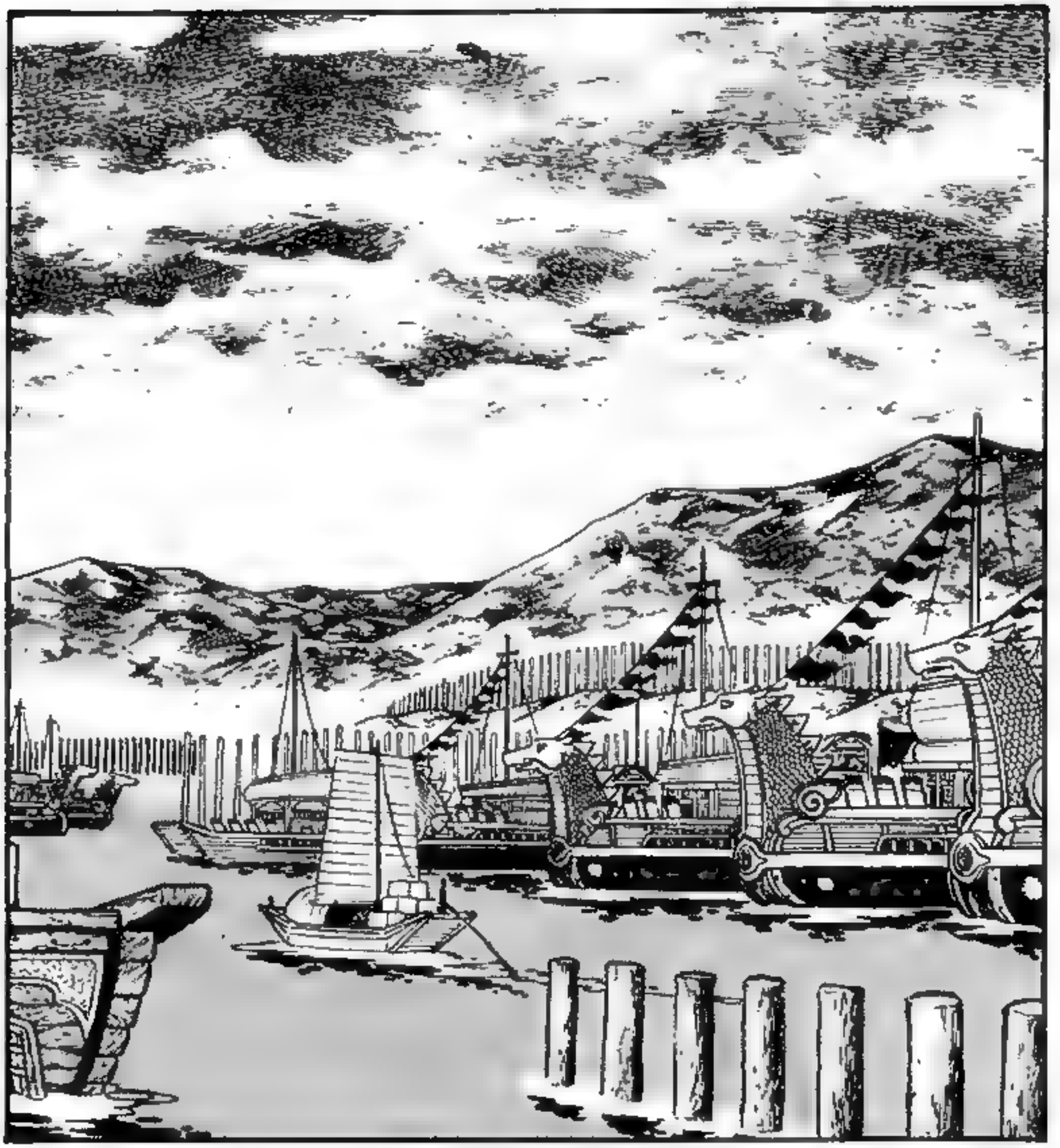
THANK YOU, BROTHER.

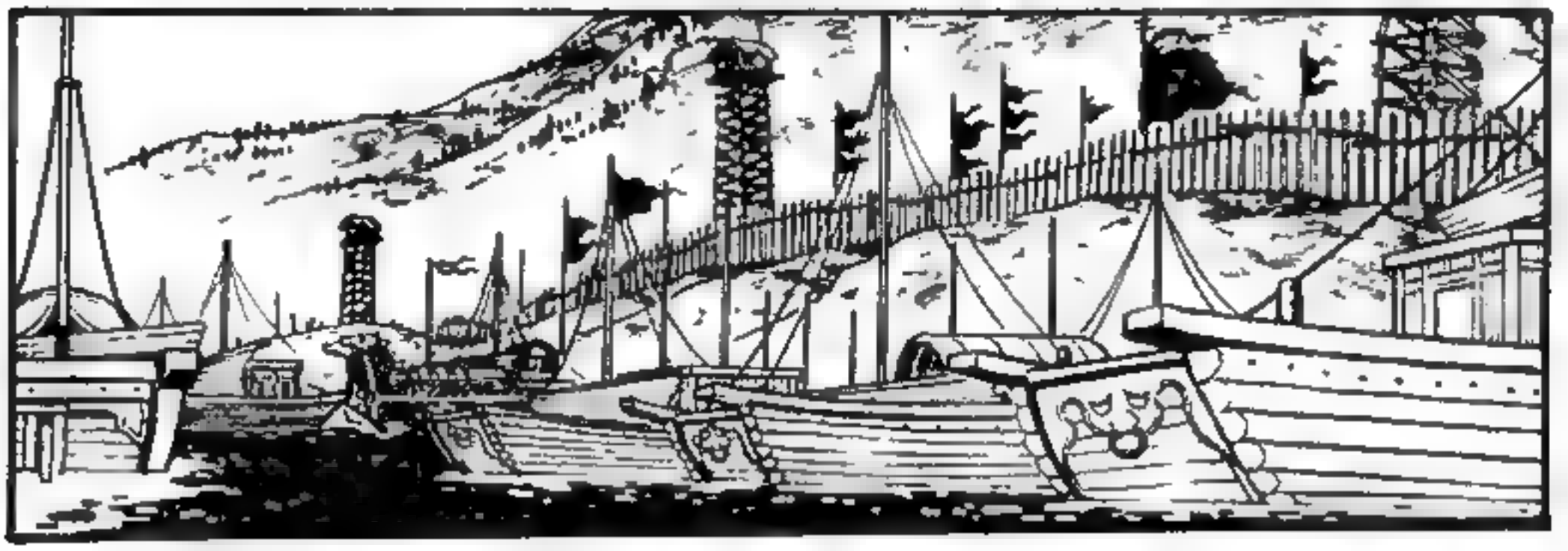
I SWEAR TO GUARD MY LORD WITH MY LIFE IF NECCESSARY.

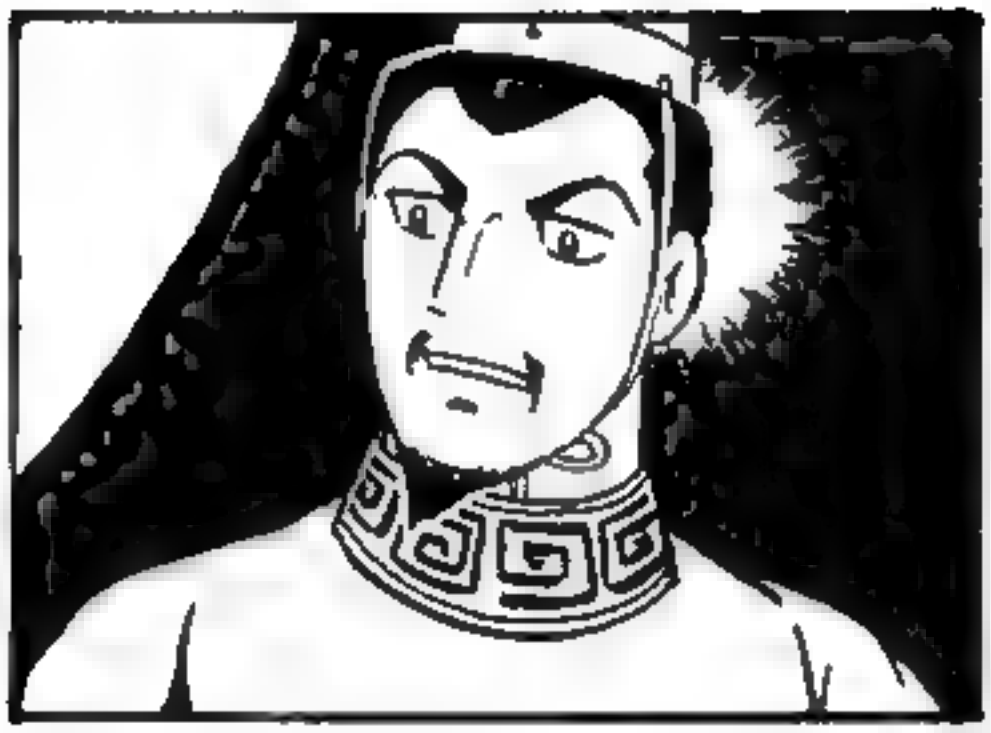


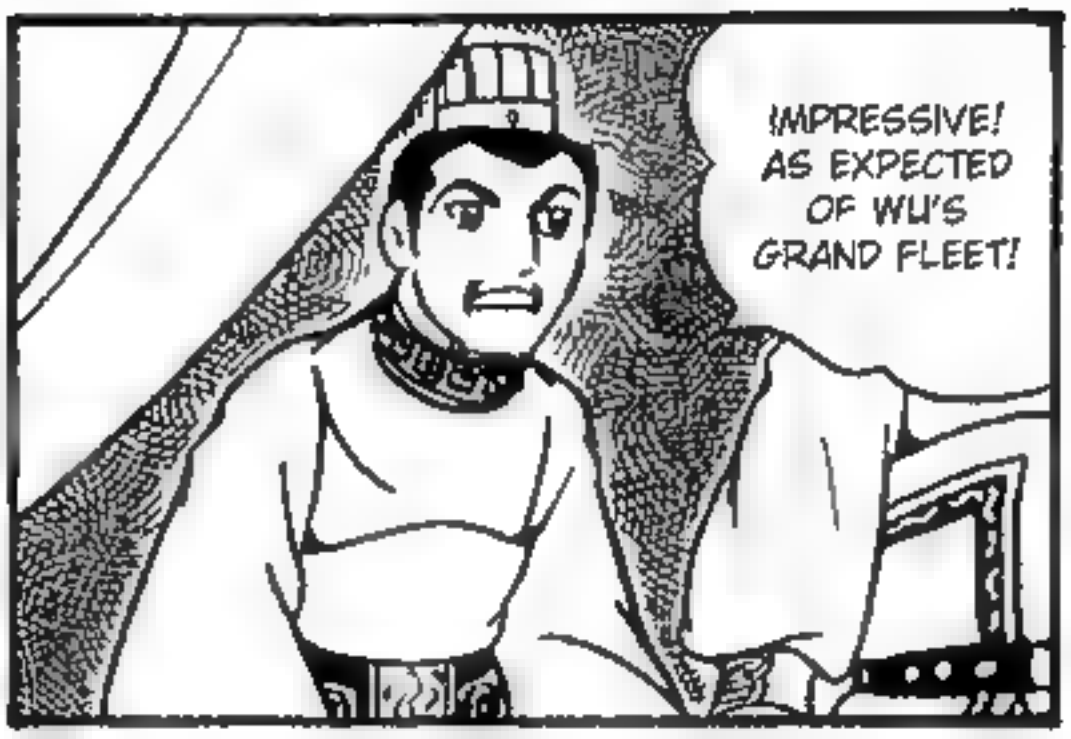


LET ME SEE.
WU'S ENCAMP-MENTS ARE UP AHEAD, MY LORD.



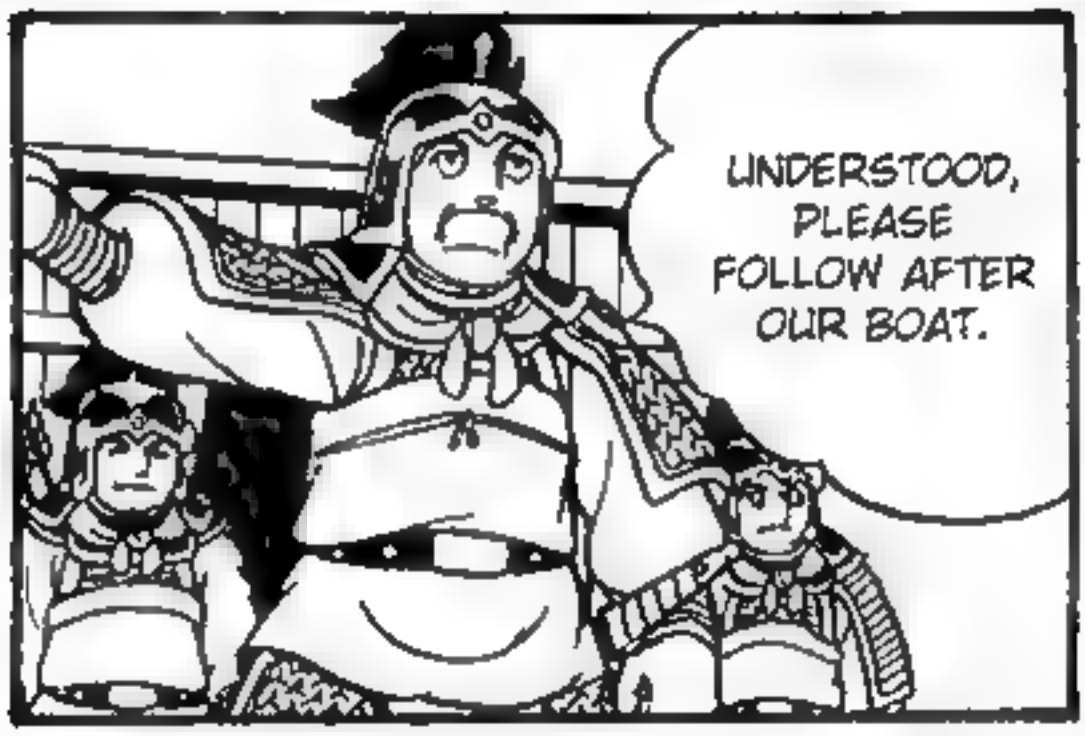




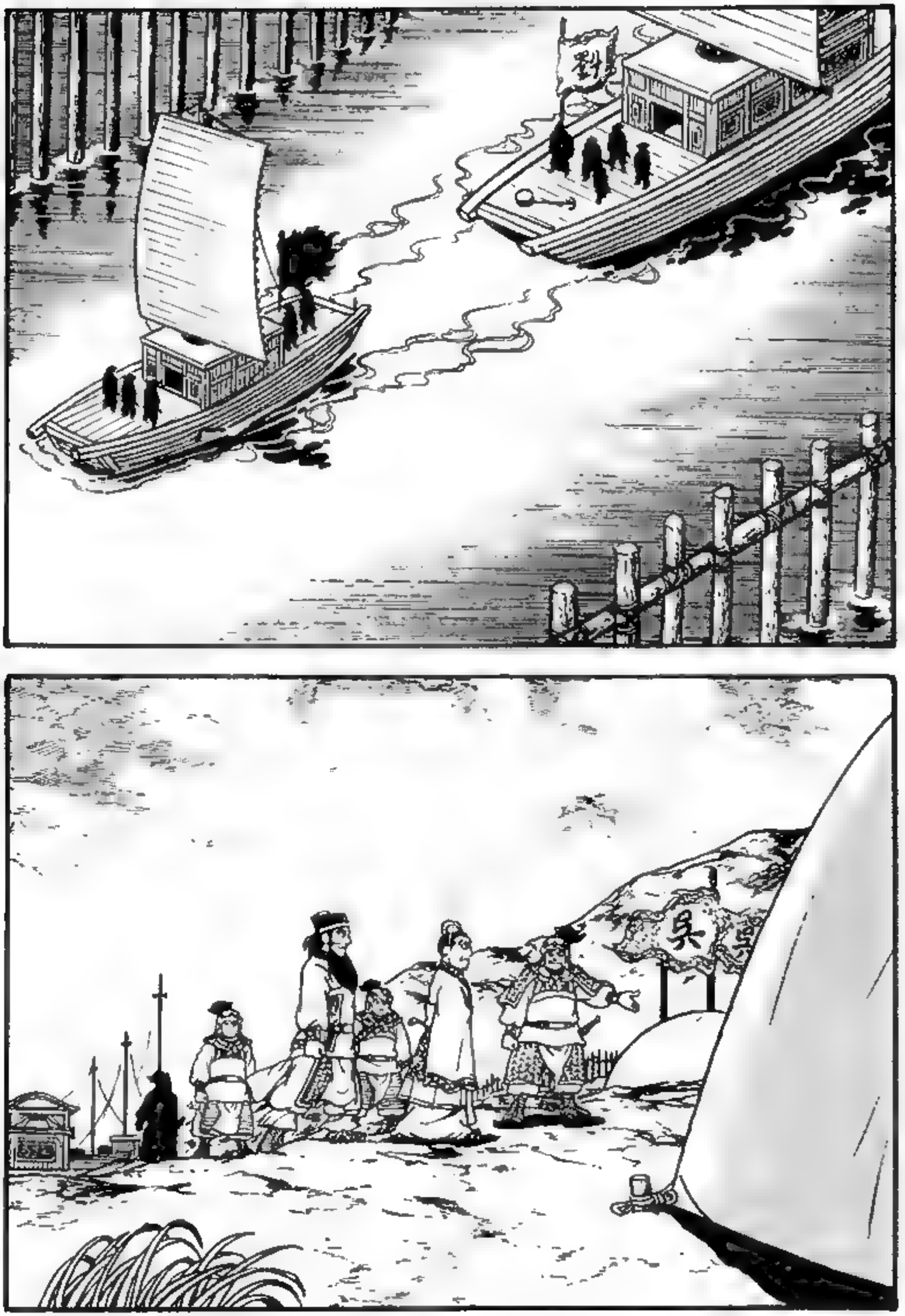

IMPRESSIVE! AS EXPECTED OF WU'S GRAND FLEET!

REPORT TO ADMIRAL ZHOU YU THAT LIU BEI XUANDE HAS COME!

HALT! IDENTIFY YOURSELF!


UNDERSTOOD, PLEASE FOLLOW AFTER OUR BOAT.

LIU BEI XUANDE?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LIU BEI HAS COME!?

ONLY 20~30!

ONLY 20~30 MEN, SIR.

HOW MANY GUARDS DID HE BRING WITH HIM?

HA! THINGS ARE GOING JUST AS I HAD HOPED.

YES, SIR.

WHEN I GIVE THE SIGNAL, YOU MEN ARE TO COME OUT FROM YOUR HIDING AND SLAY LIU BEI.

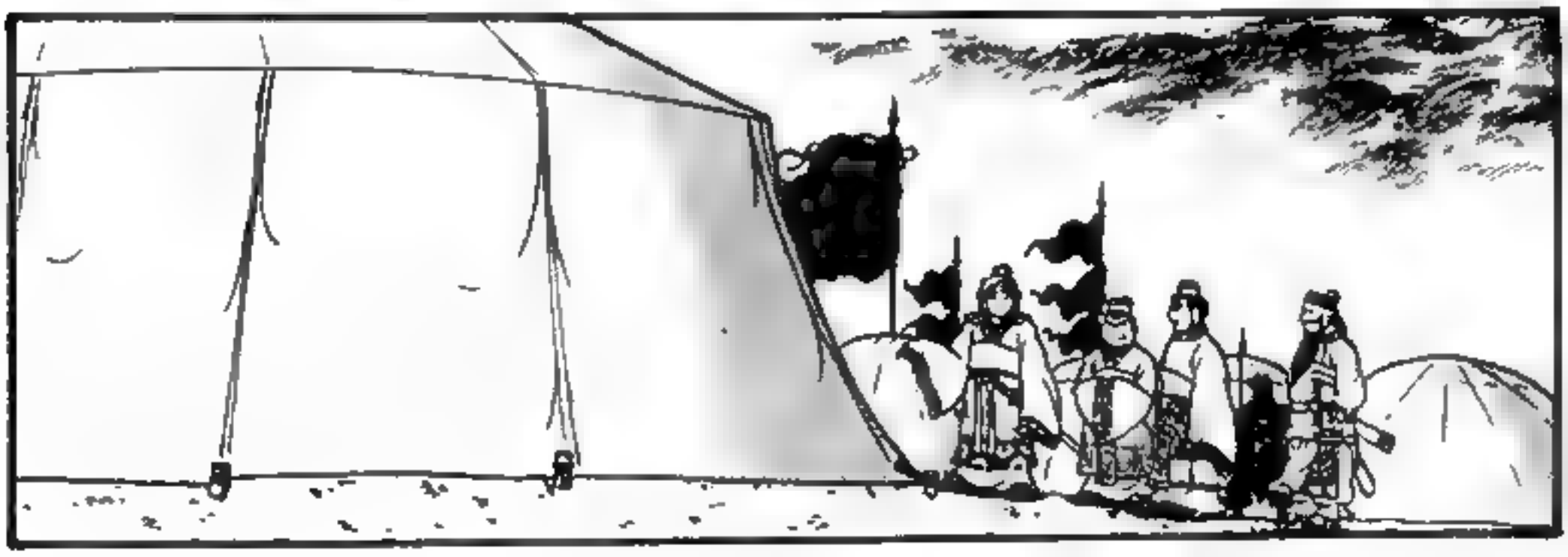
NO, NOT AT ALL. THIS IS ALL FOR THE SAKE OF OUR UPCOMING BATTLE.

THANK YOU FOR COMING ALL THIS WAY.

PLEASE, COME INSIDE TO MY TENT.

SOMETHING SUSPICIOUS IS GOING ON OUTSIDE...

HMM?



THAT ZHOU YU NOW INTENDS TO KILL BOTH MY LORD AND I, DOES HE?

IT'S MY LORD!

HMM, BUT WITH GUAN YU STANDING RIGHT BEHIND, I DOUBT ZHOU YU WILL DO ANYTHING RASH LEST HIS OWN HEAD WILL FLY FROM HIS NECK.

YOU TOO, GENERAL GUAN YU.

I'M FINE, THANK YOU.

PLEASE, DRINK TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT!

WITH THE WAR ABOUT TO BEGIN, MIGHT I ASK WHAT THE STATUS OF YOUR FORCES ARE CURRENTLY?

SPEAKING OF KONGMING, WHERE MIGHT HE BE RIGHT NOW?

I BELIEVE KONGMING CAN ANSWER THAT QUESTION BETTER THAN MYSELF.

SINCE THE BATTLE IS ON THE VERGE OF STARTING, WHY NOT SEE HIM AFTER WE CRUSH CAO CAO'S FORCES?

I'M AFRAID HE'S EXTREMELY BUSY PLANNING MANY STRATEGIES AT THE MOMENT RIGHT NOW.

FINE, THEN I SHALL TAKE MY LEAVE FOR TODAY. LET US ALL MEET AGAIN IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO CELEBRATE OUR VICTORY OVER CAO CAO.

HE REALLY MUST BE SCHEMING SOMETHING THEN...

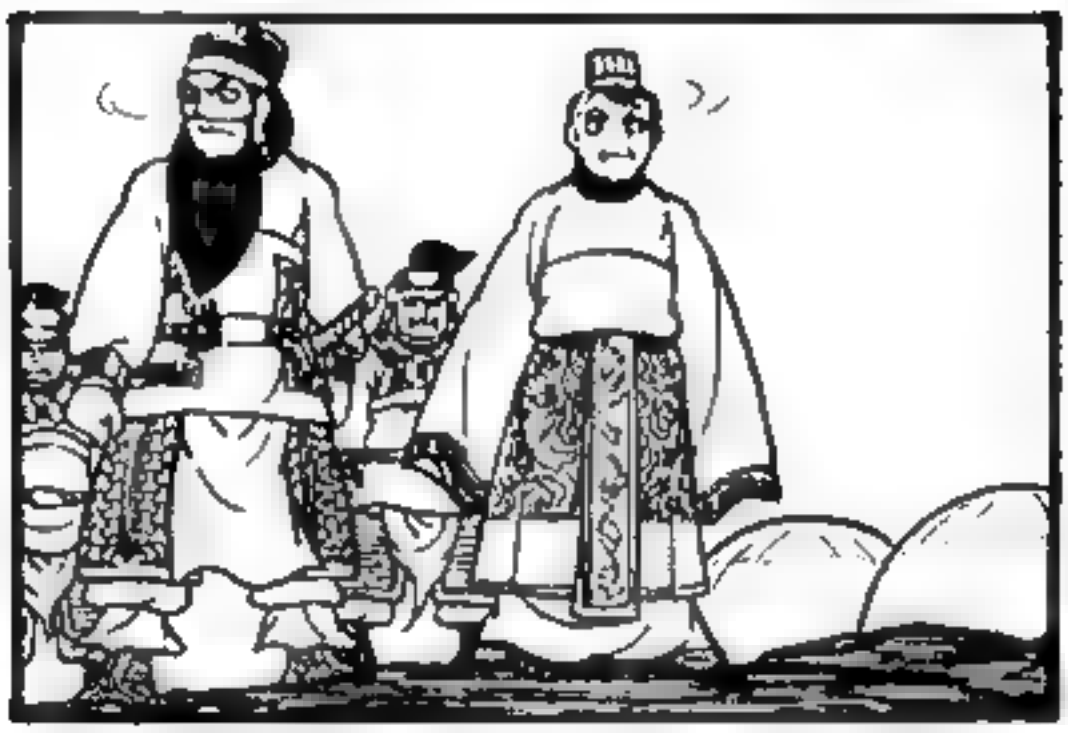
NOT LETTING A RETAINER SEE HIS OWN LORD...?

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE IN OUR CURRENT CRISIS SO I'M AFRAID I MUST GET GOING NOW.

T-THERE'S NO NEED TO LEAVE SO SOON, IS THERE?

BEFORE I LEAVE, I MUST COMPLIMENT HOW IMPRESSIVE WU'S NAVY LOOKS. TRULY, YOU ARE A MOST DEPENDABLE ALLY, SIR.

NGHH...



MY LORD!

AHH!

KONG-
MING!

OVER HERE,
MY LORD!

I, TOO, WAS WORRIED ABOUT MY LORD.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU SAFE AND SOUND. I WAS GETTING QUITE WORRIED.

HOW COULD YOU COME HERE SO LIGHTLY GUARDED, MY LORD!?

PLEASE COME INSIDE BEFORE ANYONE NOTICES US.

AND WHEN WOULD THAT BE?

PLEASE DO NOT WORRY ABOUT ME. I SHALL RETURN TO YOUR SIDE WHEN THE SOUTHEASTERN WINDS BLOW.

BUT I WAS VERY ANXIOUS ABOUT YOUR SAFETY.

I CANNOT RETURN WITH YOU AT THE MOMENT BUT I SHALL RETURN ON THAT DAY AS THE SOUTH-EASTERN WINDS BLOW.

ON THE 20TH DAY OF THE 11TH MONTH, SEND ZHAO ZILONG ON A SMALL SPEEDY BOAT TO THE SOUTH BANK TO COME PICK ME UP.

DURING MY 10 YEARS IN THESE REGIONS AS A FARMER, I'VE STUDIED THE WEATHER AND CLIMATE OF THE GREAT RIVER. I CAN PREDICT AT LEAST THAT MUCH.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THE WINDS WILL BE BLOWING THAT DAY AND IN THAT DIRECTION?

I SHALL AWAIT YOUR RETURN THEN.

NOW PLEASE RETURN AT ONCE.

WHY DIDN'T YOU GO ON AHEAD WITH THE ASSA-SSINATION?

HAD I DONE ANYTHING, MY HEAD WOULD'VE BEEN THE FIRST THING TO GO FLYING.

HOW COULD I WITH THAT GUAN YU WATCHING LIKE A HAWK OVER ME!? HE WAS OBSERVING EVERY LAST MOVEMENT OF EVEN MY FINGERS!

.....

MY PLAN WAS TO GET THEM BOTH DRUNK BEFORE MAKING MY MOVE BUT THEY SLIPPED THROUGH MY FINGERS...!

LET HIM IN.

WHAT?
A MESSENGER FROM CAO CAO HAS COME.

CHANCELLOR CAO CAO WISHES TO GIVE YOU THIS MESSAGE.

HMM?

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS!?

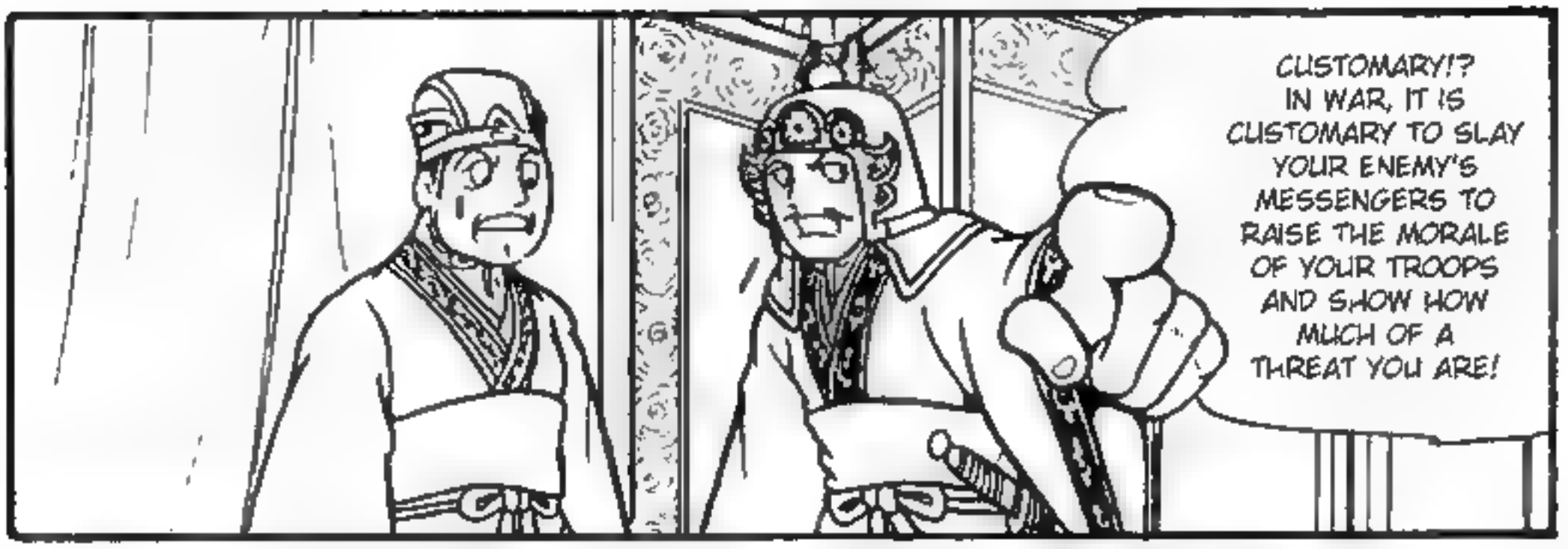
DID YOU THINK I WOULD JUST SURRENDER IF CAO CAO GUARANTEED MY POST AND RANK!?

JUST LOOK RIGHT HERE! IT SAYS THIS LETTER IS ADDRESSED FROM CHANCELLOR CAO CAO OF HAN TO HIS ADMIRAL ZHOU YU! SINCE WHEN DID I BECOME CAO CAO'S DOG!?

C-CALM DOWN, ADMIRAL! IT IS CUSTOMARY FOR NATIONS TO REFRAIN FROM KILLING EACH OTHER'S MESSENGERS.

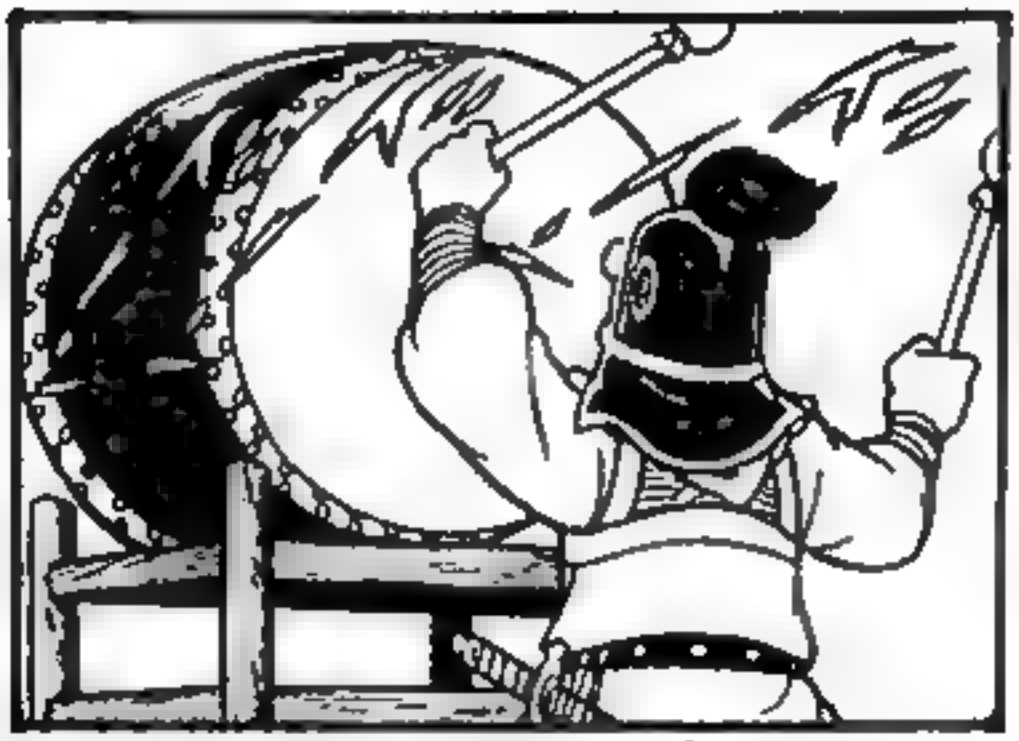
ACK!

OFF WITH HIS HEAD!


CUSTOMARY!? IN WAR, IT IS CUSTOMARY TO SLAY YOUR ENEMY'S MESSENGERS TO RAISE THE MORALE OF YOUR TROOPS AND SHOW HOW MUCH OF A THREAT YOU ARE!

DIE!

YES, SIR.
SEND THIS HEAD BACK TO CAO CAO AS MY REPLY.



GIVE THE SIGNAL TO ATTACK!

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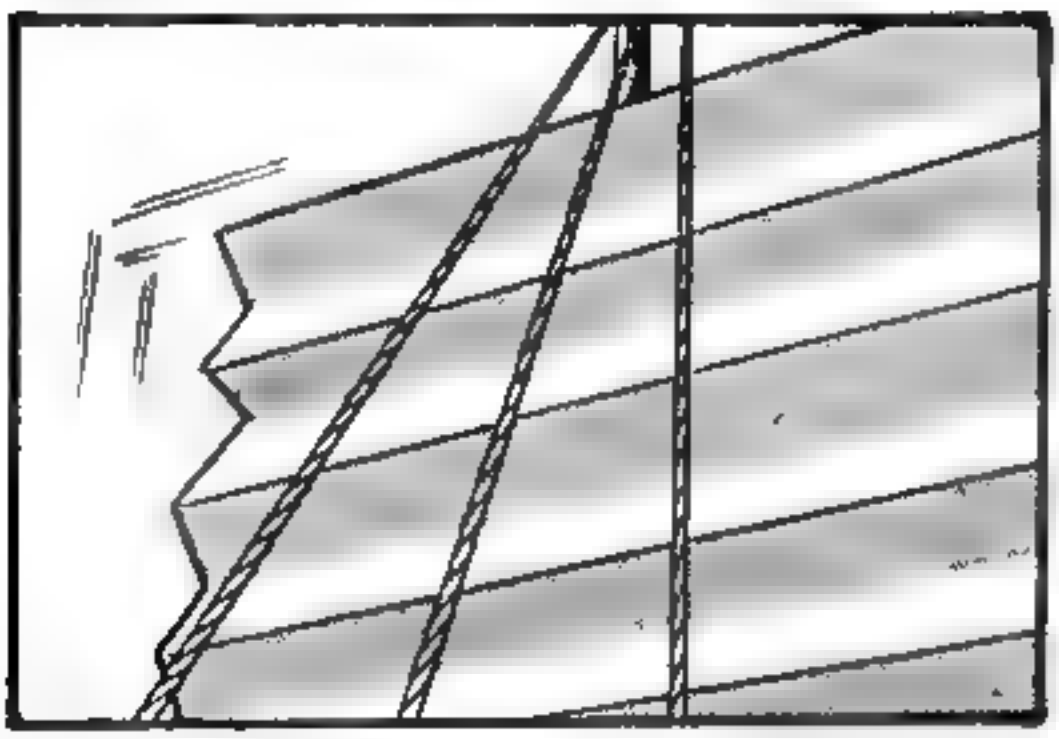
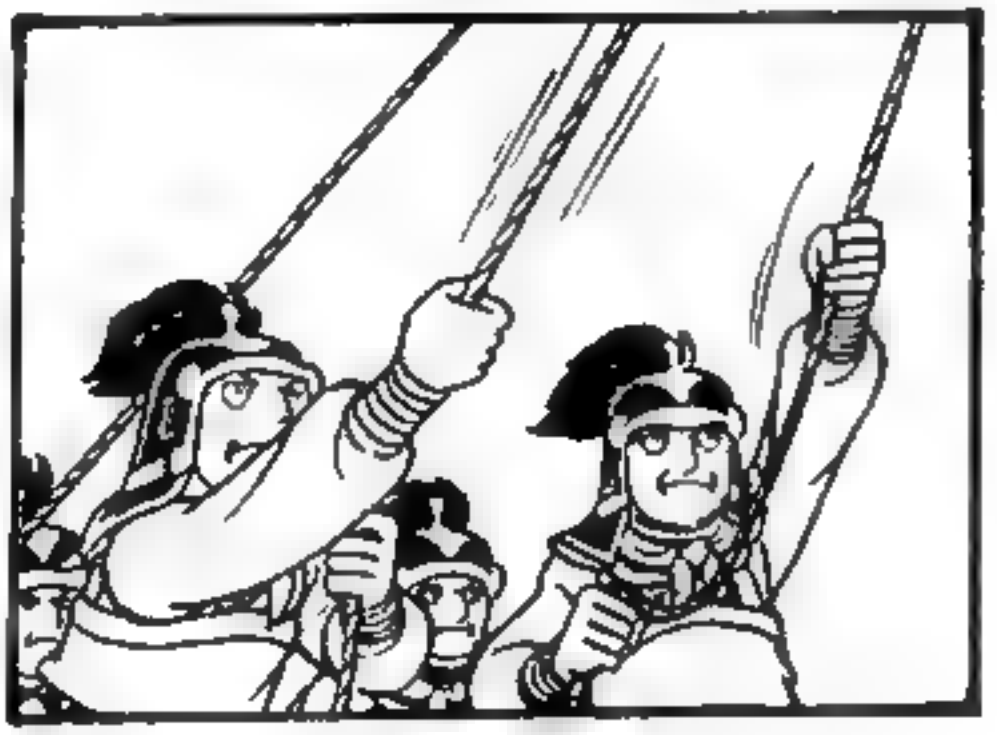
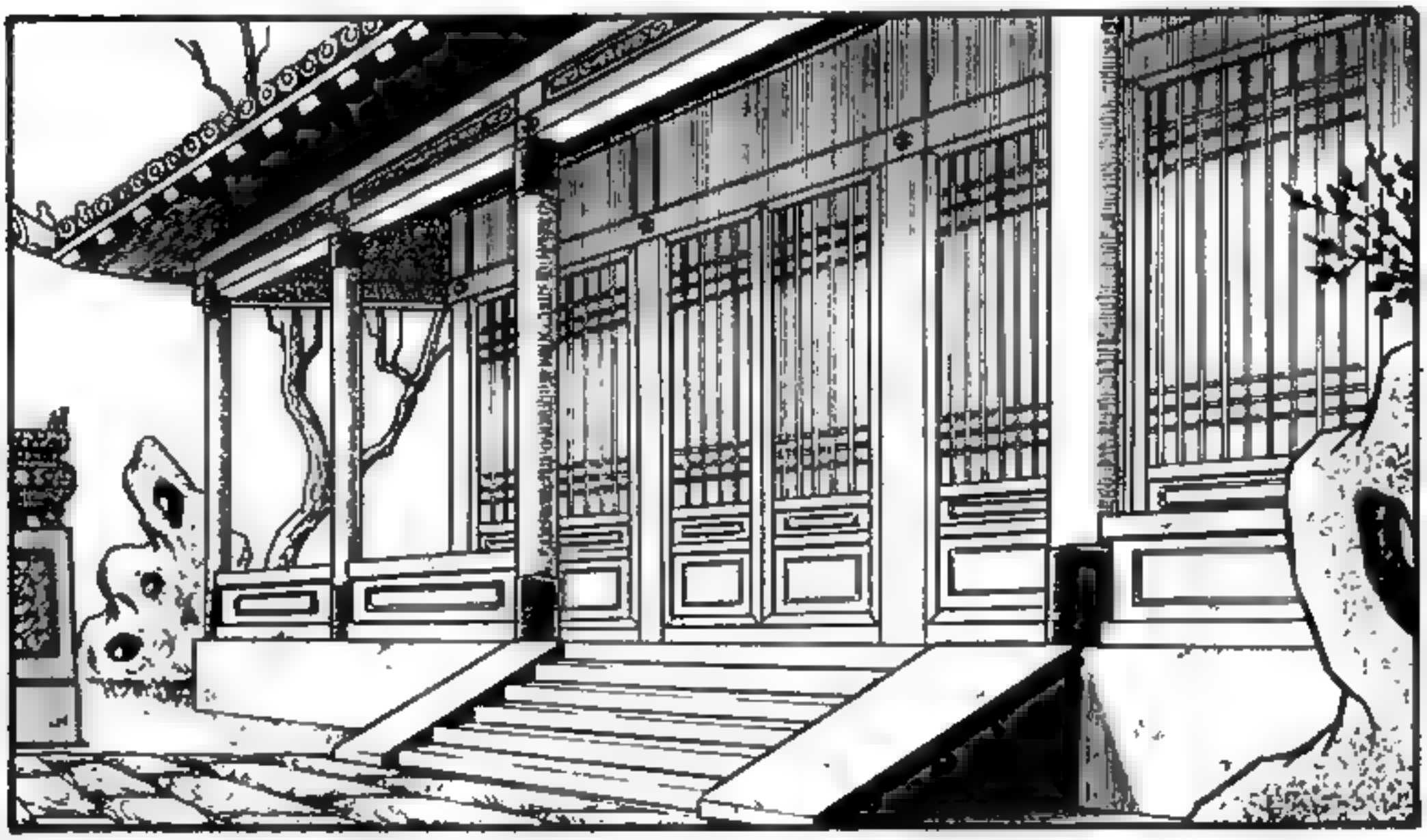




# GRAND NAVAL FORTRESS



SO BE IT, YOU SHALL HAVE YOUR WAR, WU.

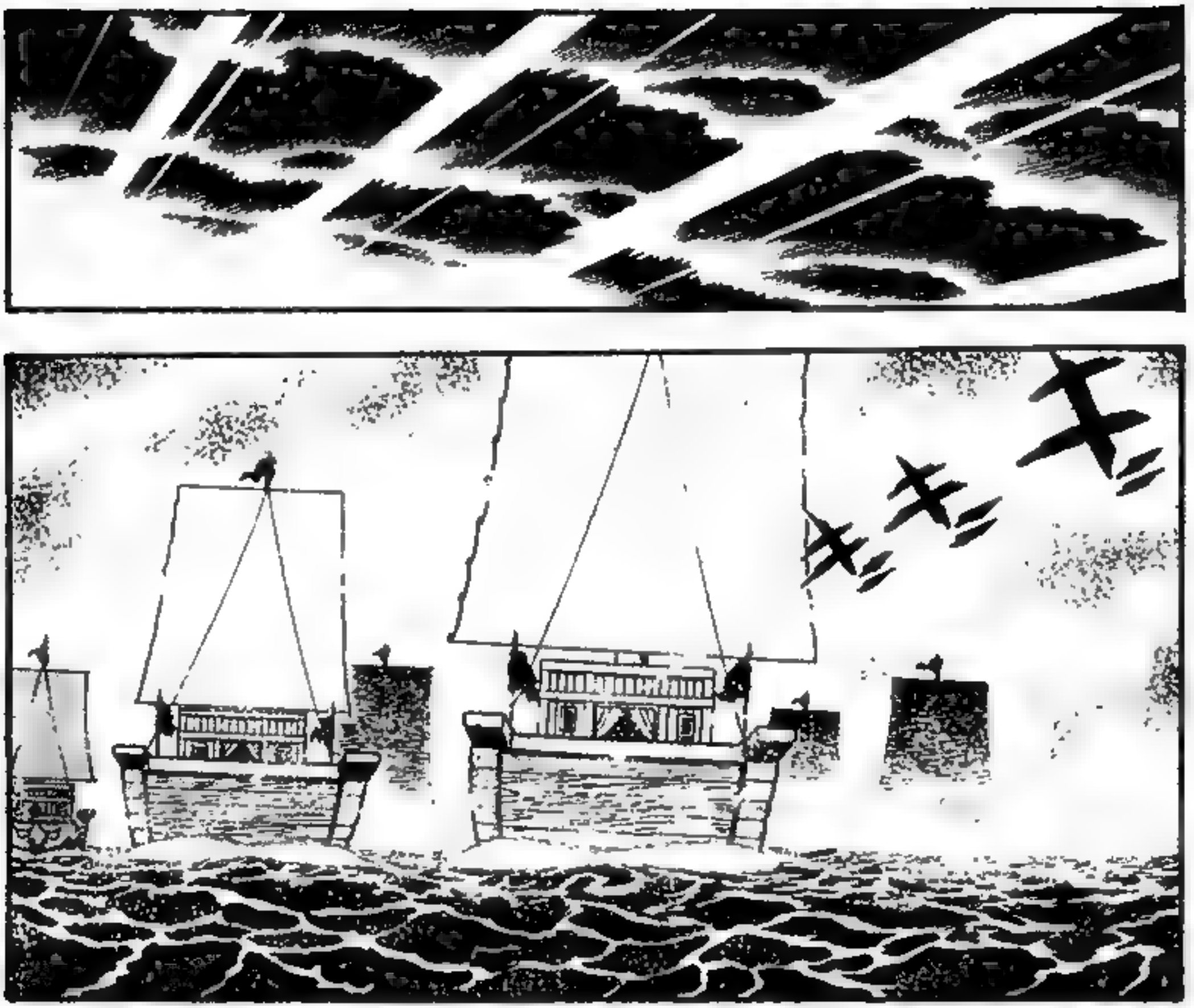
YES?

CAI MAO!

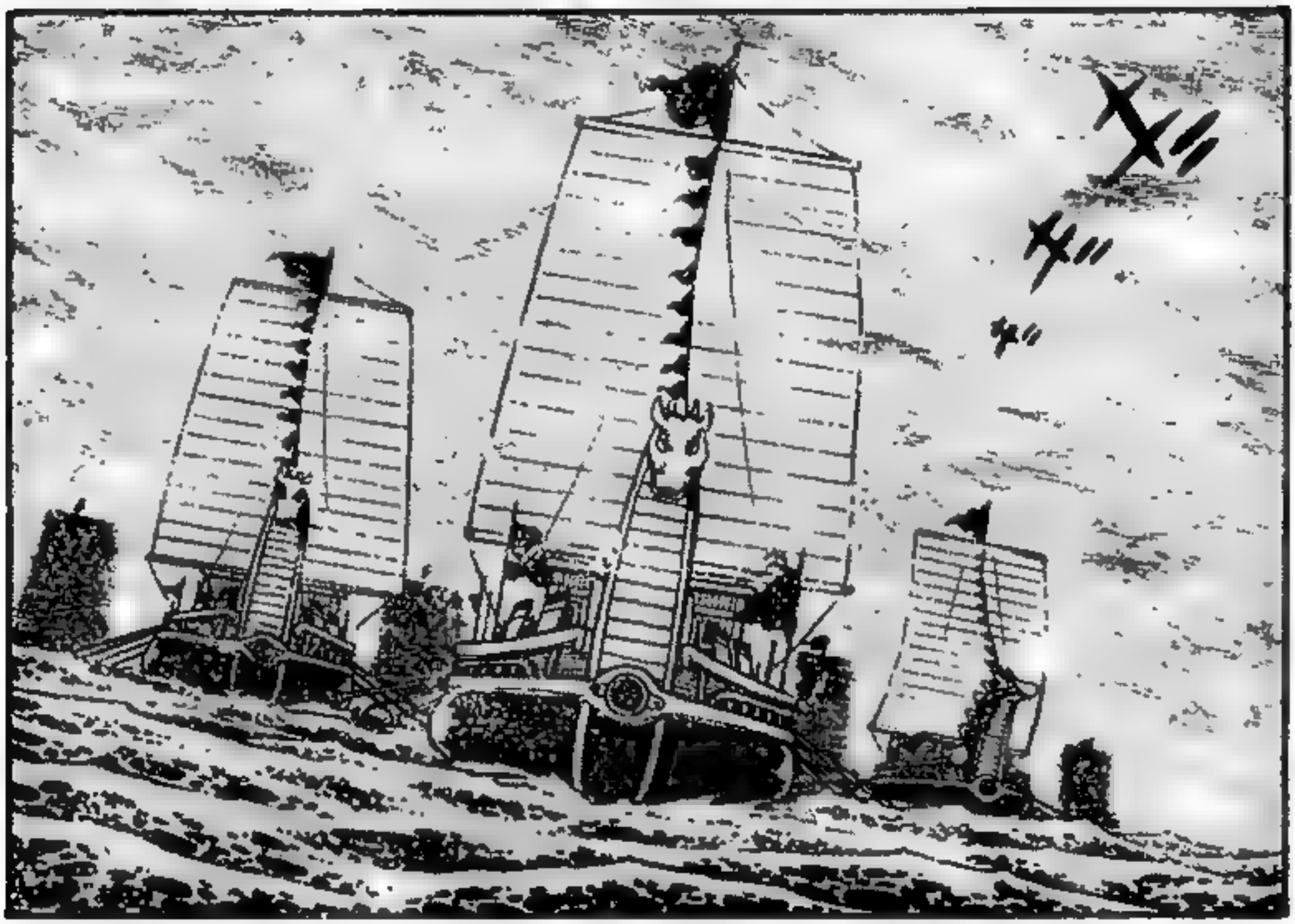
JUST YOU WAIT, ZHOU YU. I'LL BREAK THROUGH YOUR LINES AND HAVE YOUR LORD SUN QUAN KNEEL BEFORE MY FEET...!

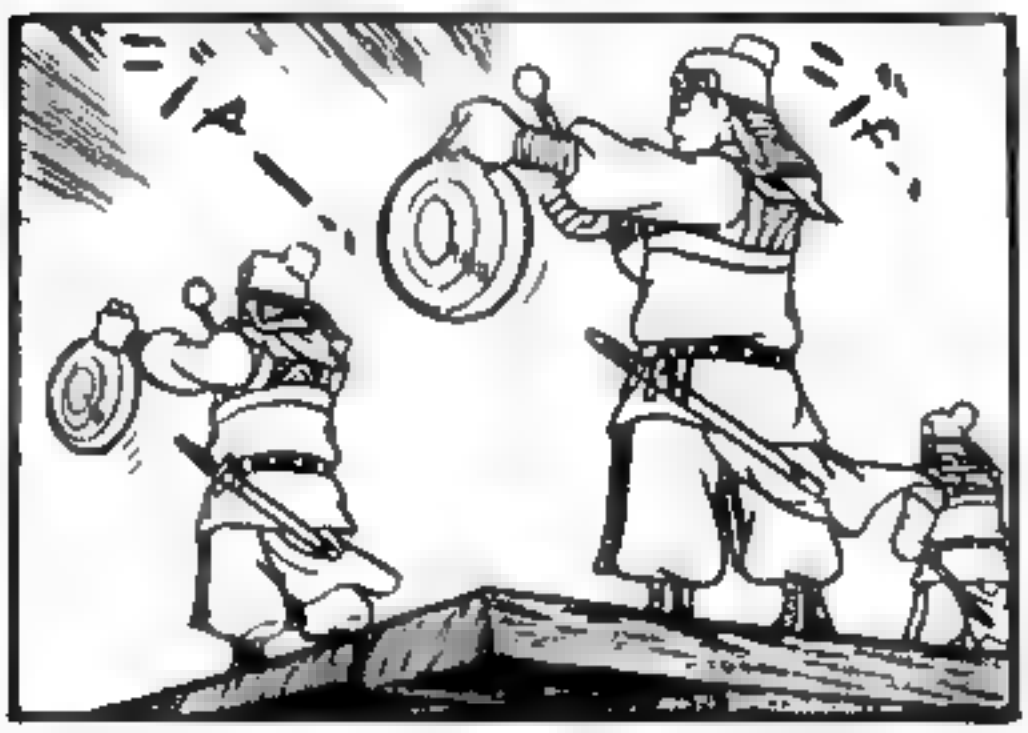
YES, SIR!

THE REASON WHY I MADE YOU IN CHARGE OF THE NAVY IS FOR TIMES LIKE THESE. LEAD OUR FORCES TO VICTORY AND YOU SHALL BE GREATLY REWARDED.



*FLAGS (曹) READ CAO FOR CAO CAO AND (蔡) CAI FOR CAI MAO




"A-"
"E-"

ATTACK!

祭
祭

HMPH! IF YOU'VE ACTUALLY GOT ANY BACKBONE, THEN COME OVER HERE AND PROVE IT! I, CAI XUN, YOUNGER BROTHER OF CAI MAO, SHALL BE GLAD TO TAKE YOUR HEAD!

THE JINGZHOU MONGRELS WHO WERE TOO COWARDLY TO FIGHT AGAINST CAO CAO DARES TO CHALLENGE OUR MIGHTY SOLDIERS!? AHAHAHAHA!

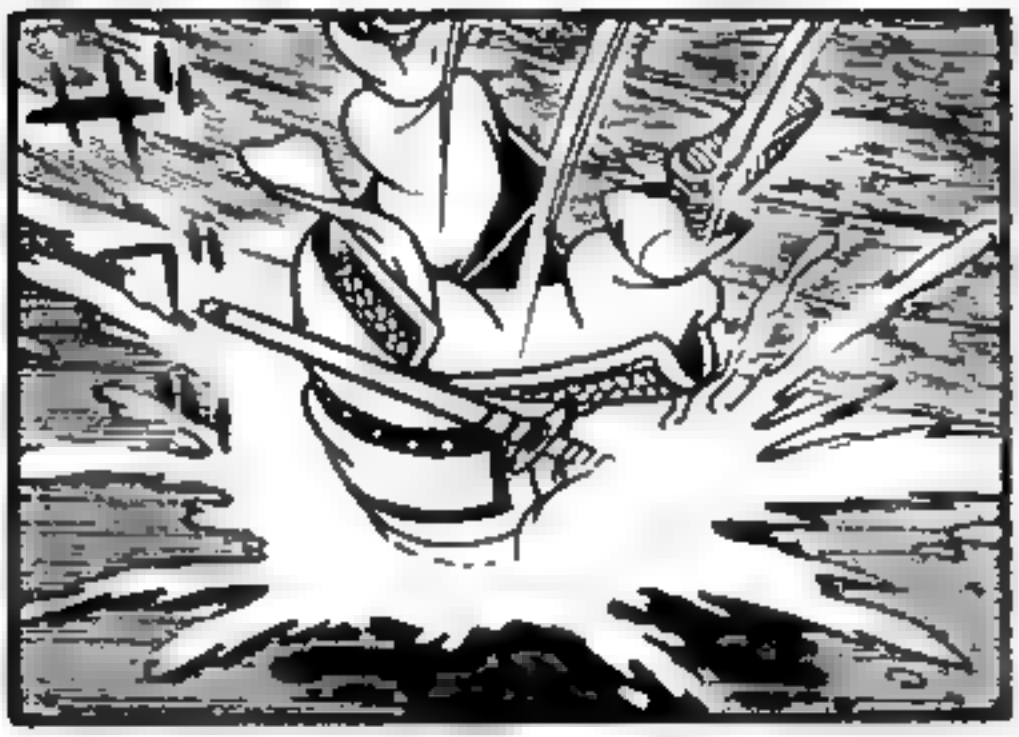
AS I SAID, NOTHING BUT A MONGREL!

TO NOT EVEN KNOW WHO HE'S DEALING WITH...

OH? LOOKS LIKE THE BRASH YOUNGSTER HAS NO IDEA WHO I AM.

ピュッ

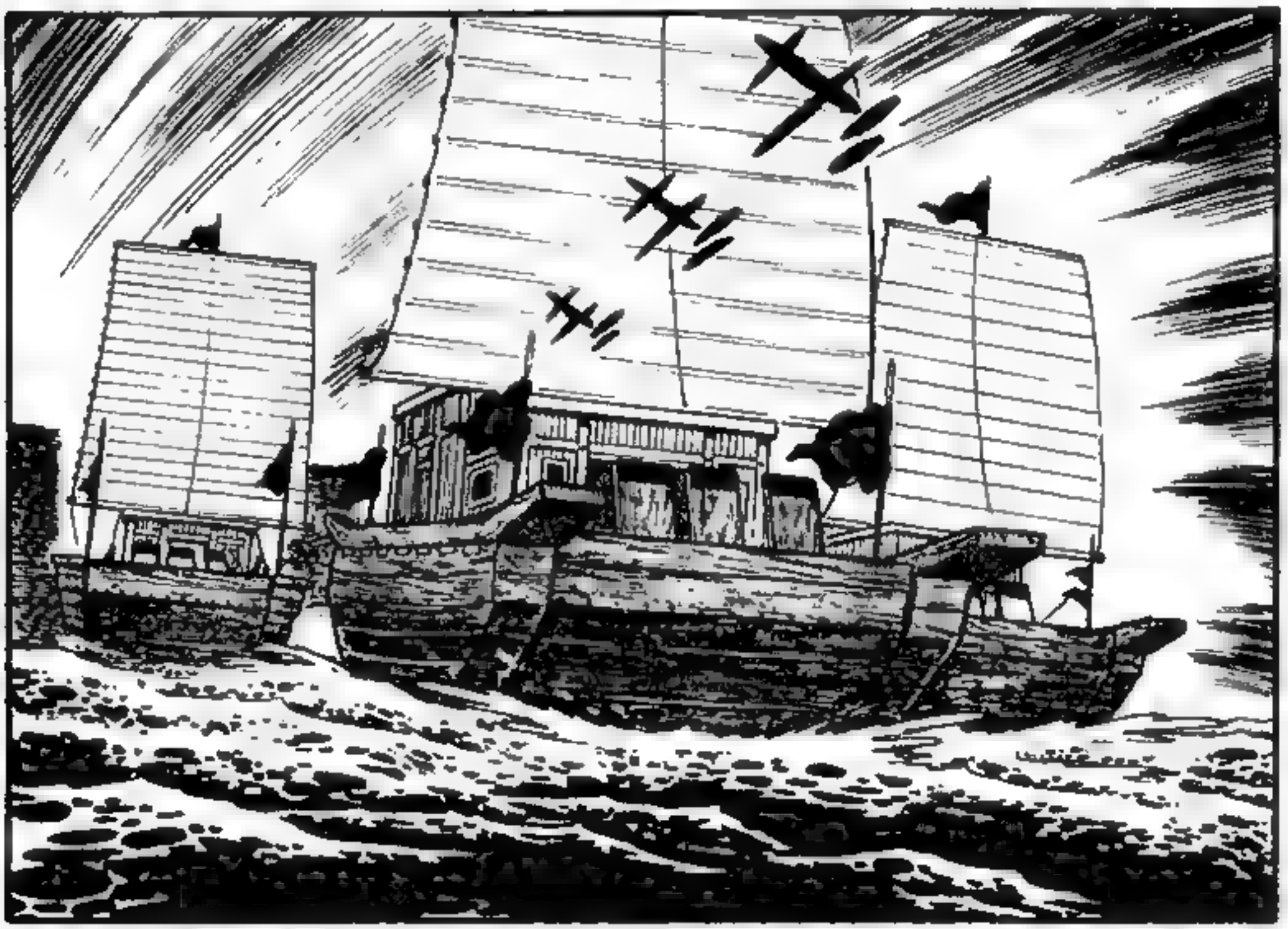
MY NAME IS GAN NING! REMEMBER IT AS YOU GO TO HELL!



UGH!

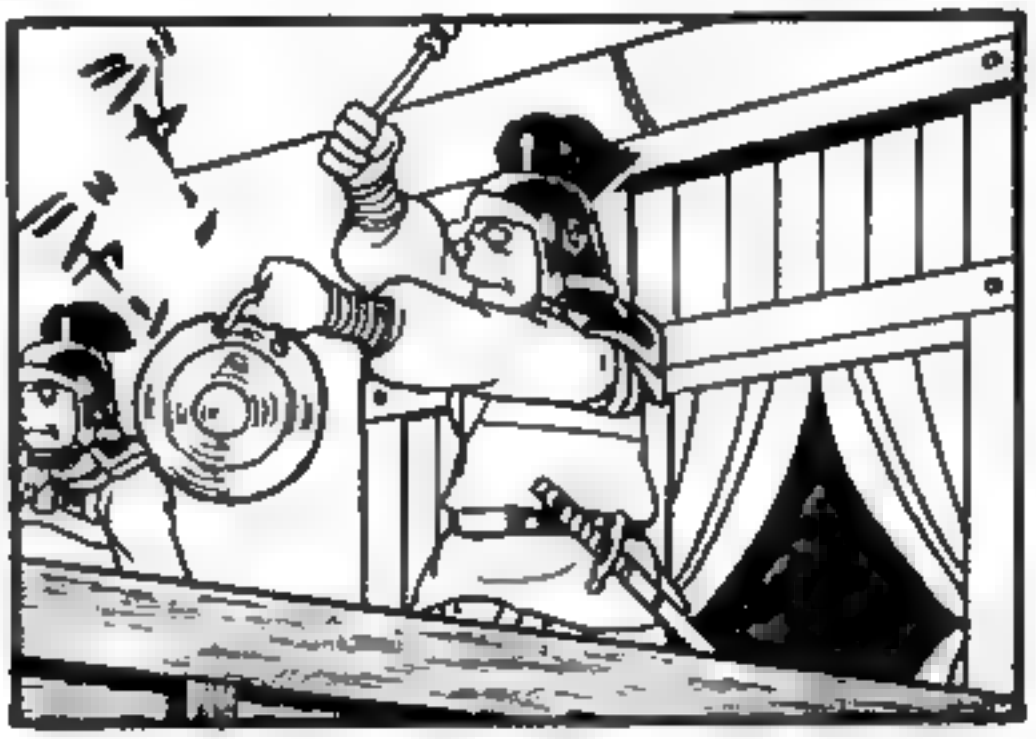
HOW DARE THEY...!
CHARGE FULL SPEED AHEAD!

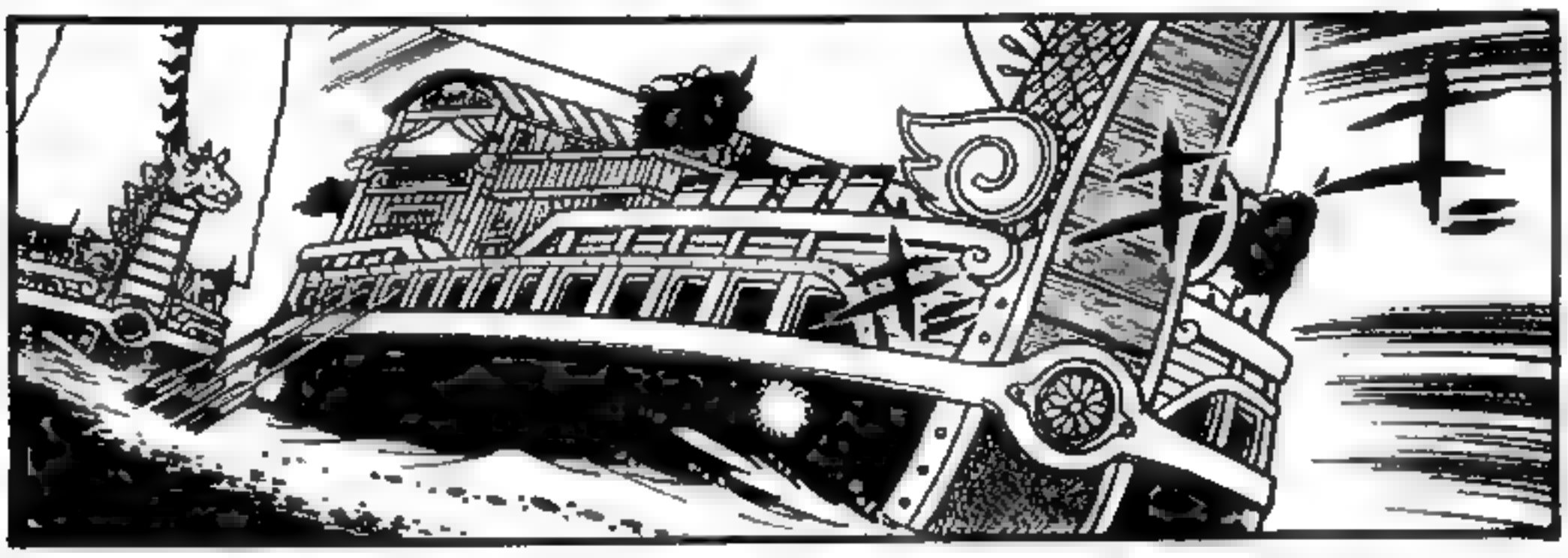
AHH! MY YOUNGER BROTHER CAI XUN!



LET THEM CHARGE IN DEEPER WHILE GIVING THE SIGNAL TO DIVIDE OUR FORCES TO THE LEFT AND RIGHT.

HAHAHA, FOOLS!
THE ENEMIES ARE SAILING RIGHT TOWARDS US, ADMIRAL.





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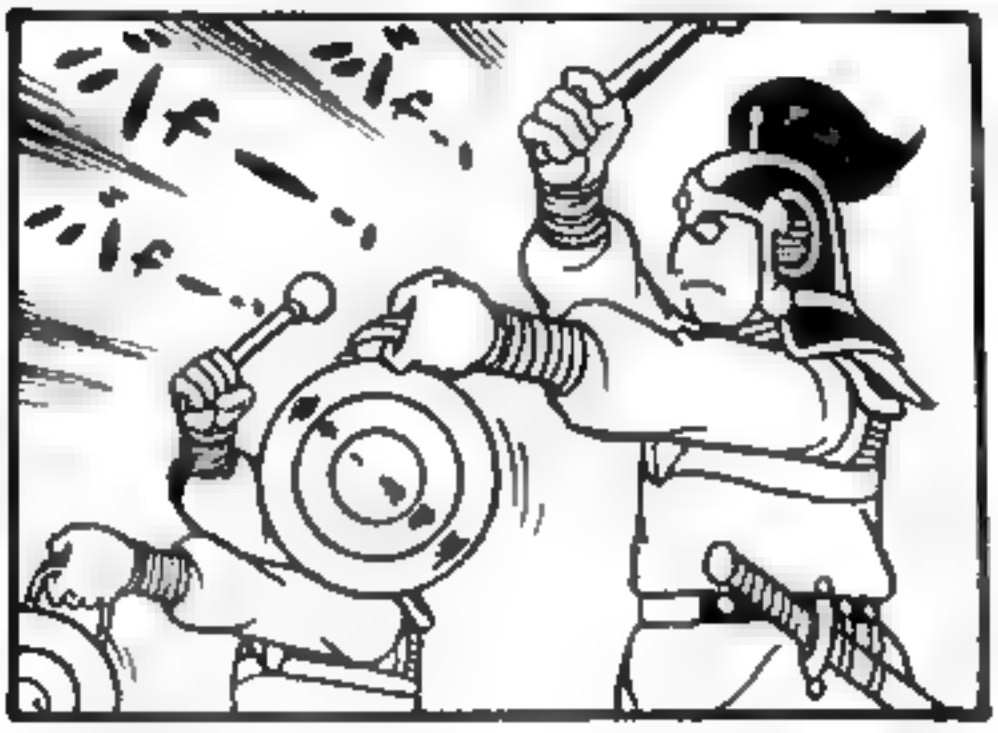
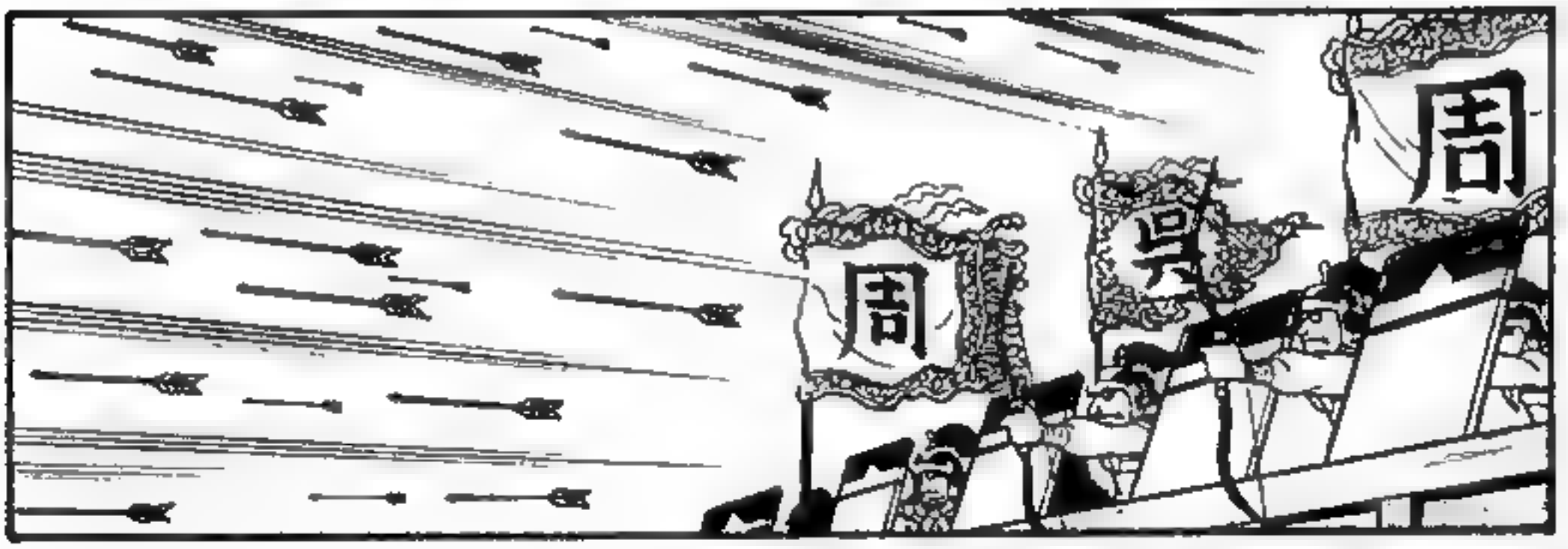
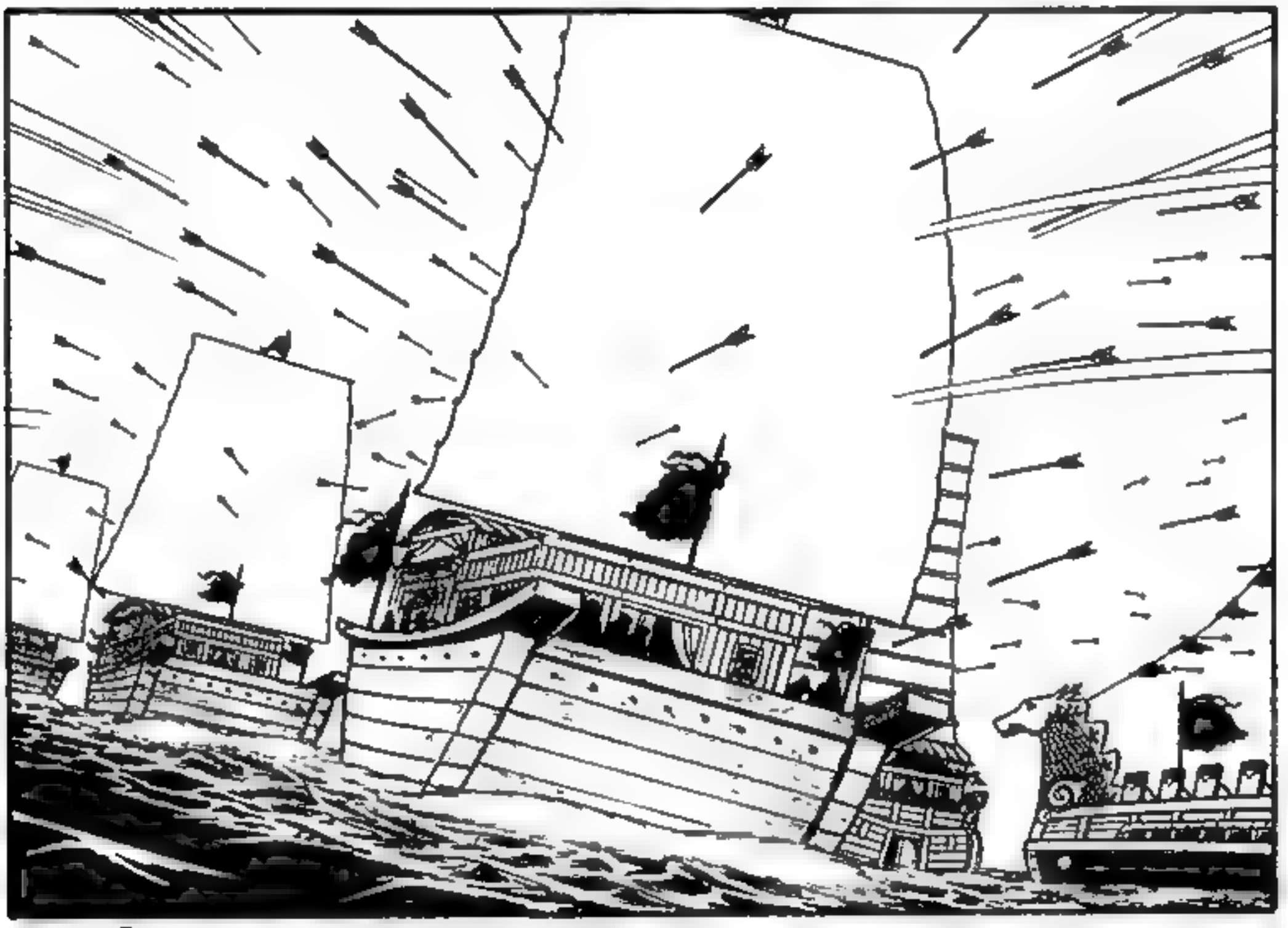
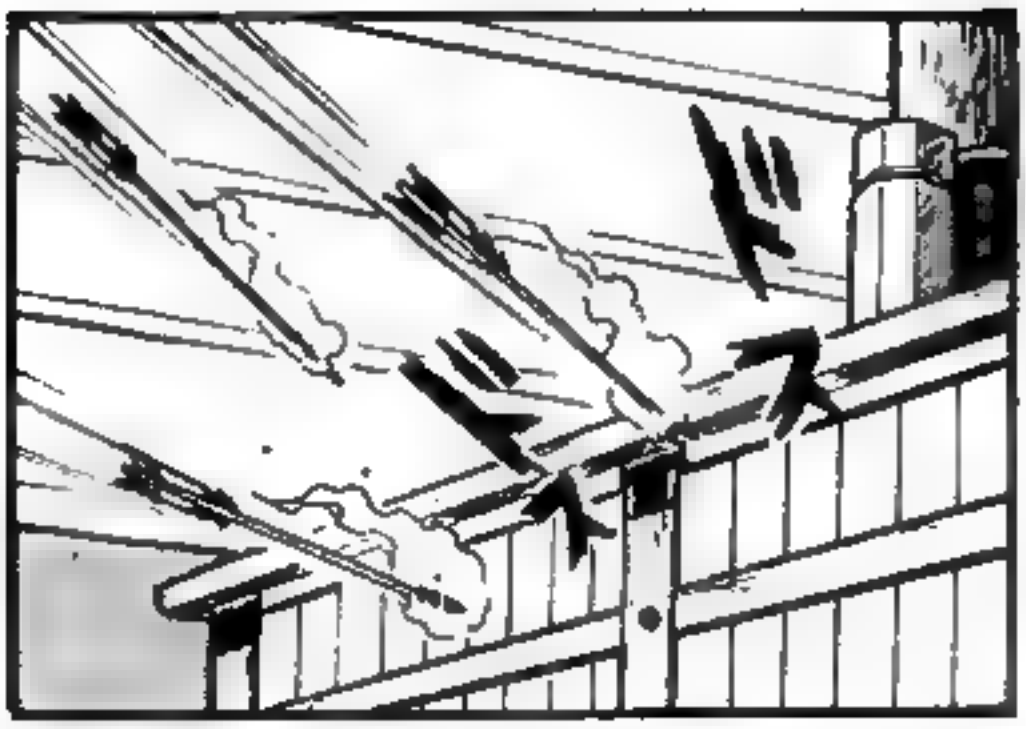




*FLAGS (吳) READ WU AND (周) READ ZHOU FOR ZHOU YU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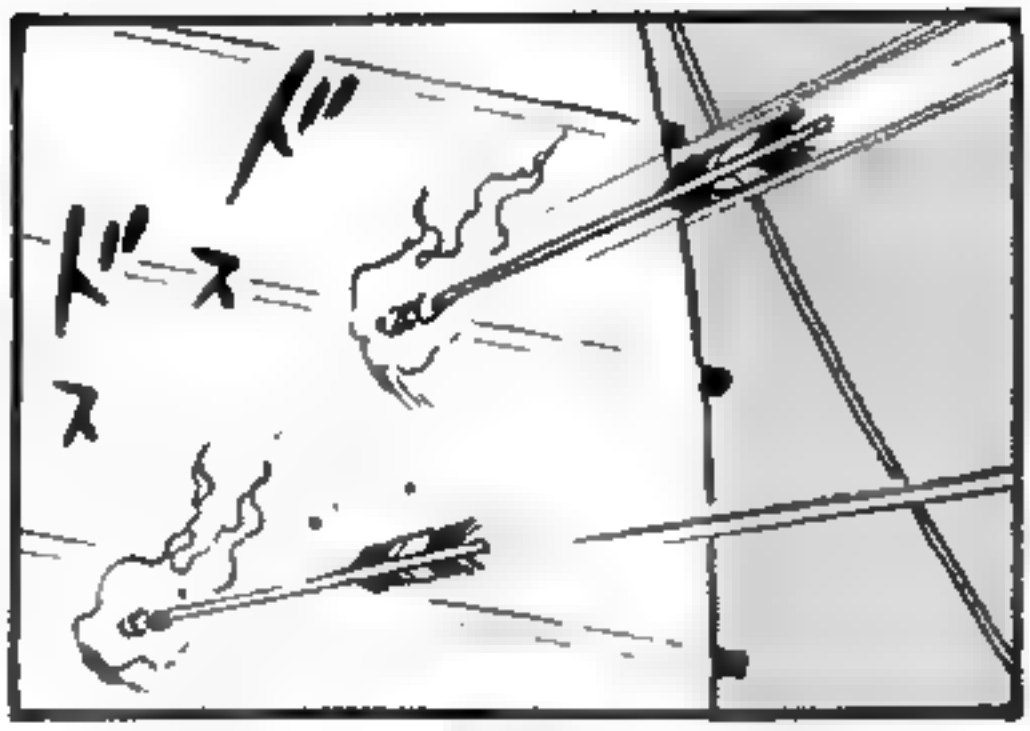
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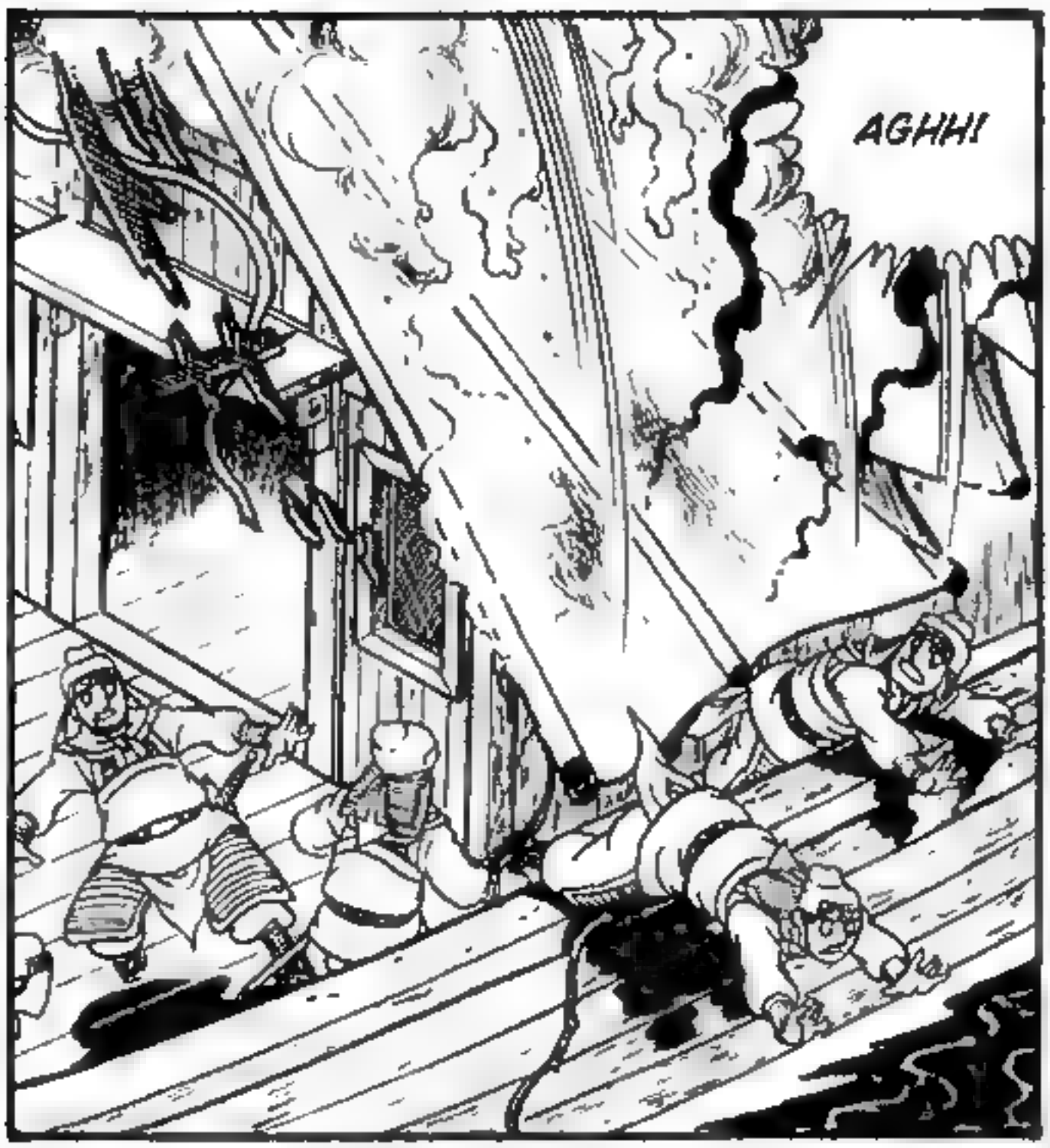
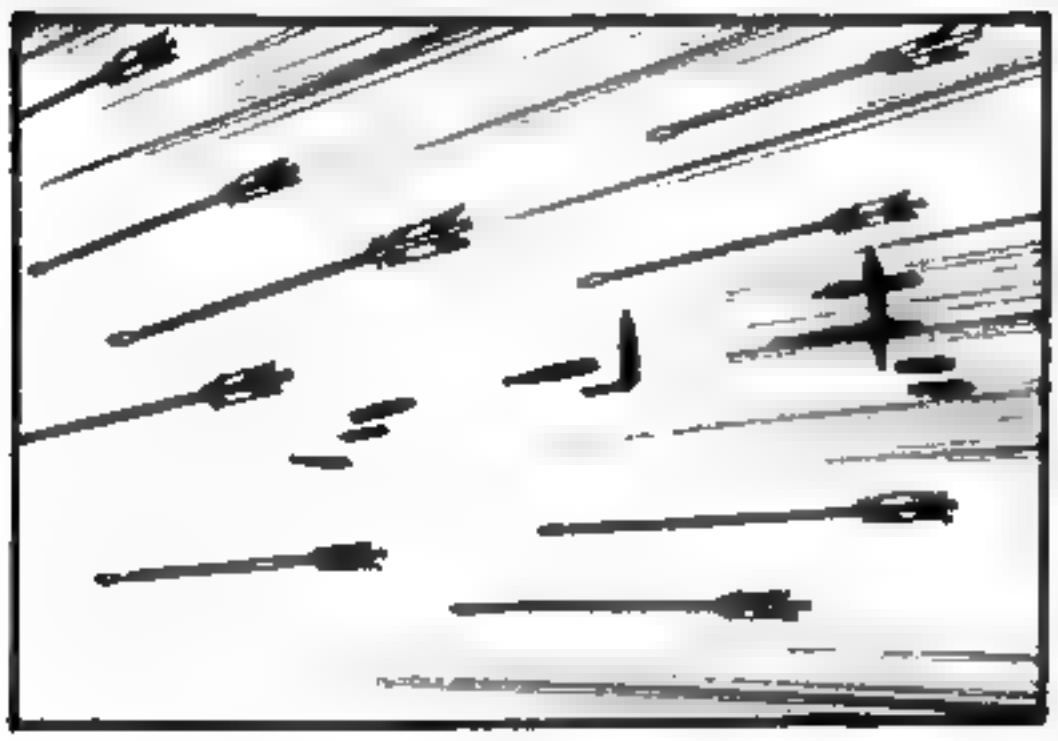
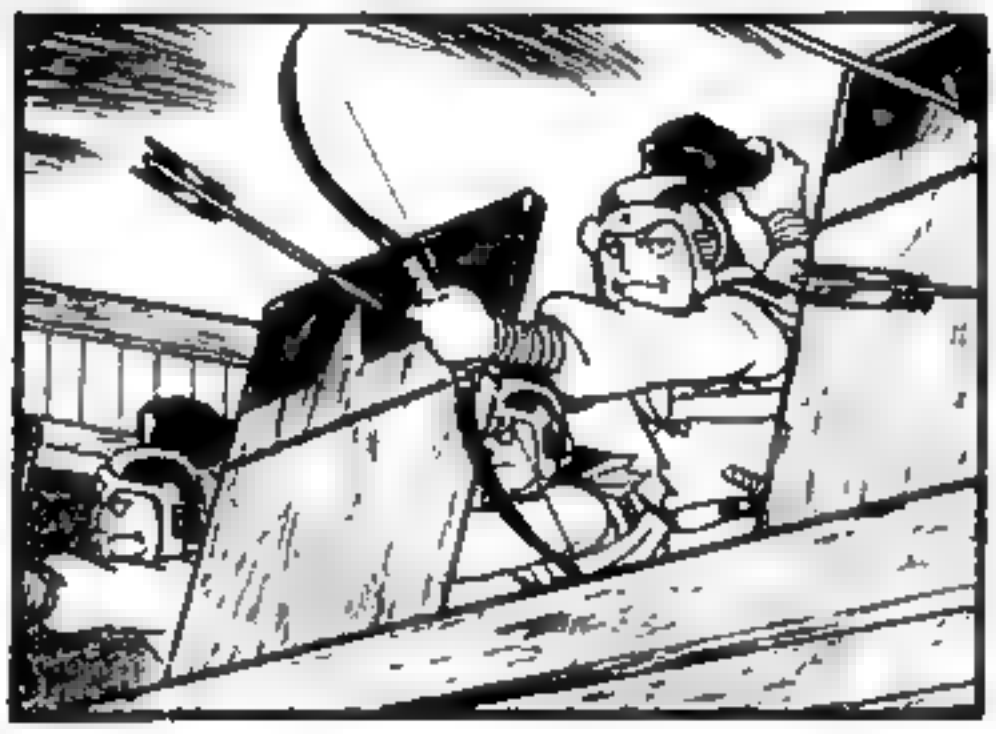
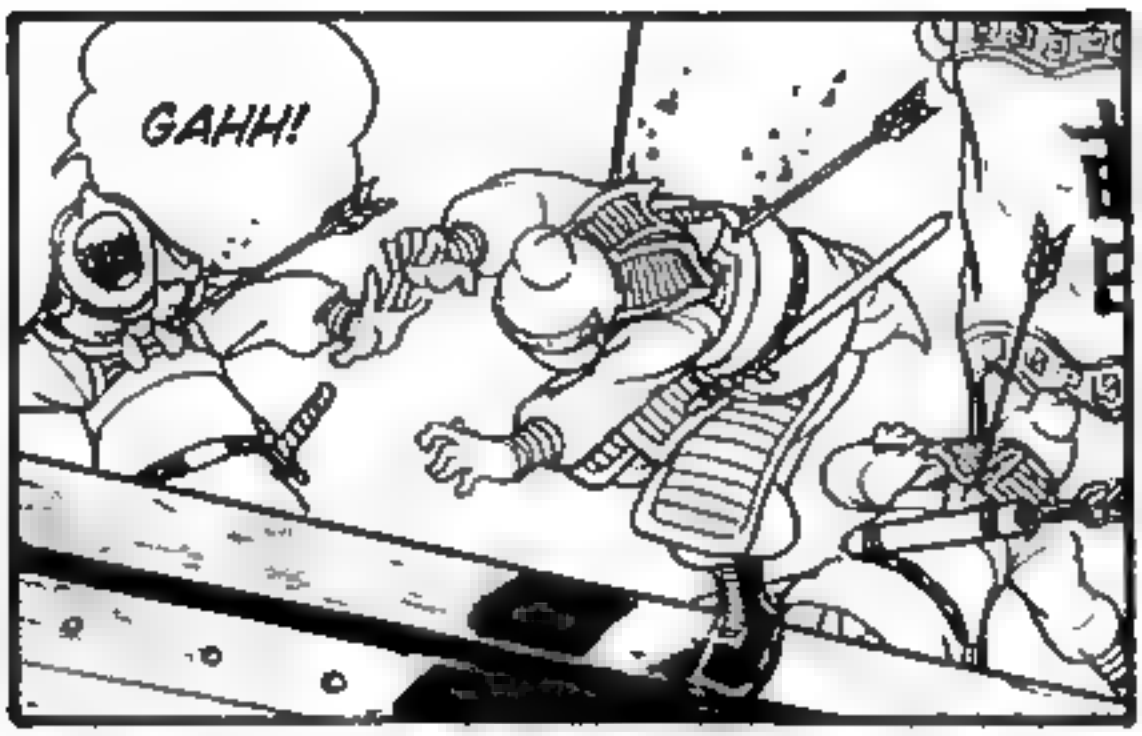
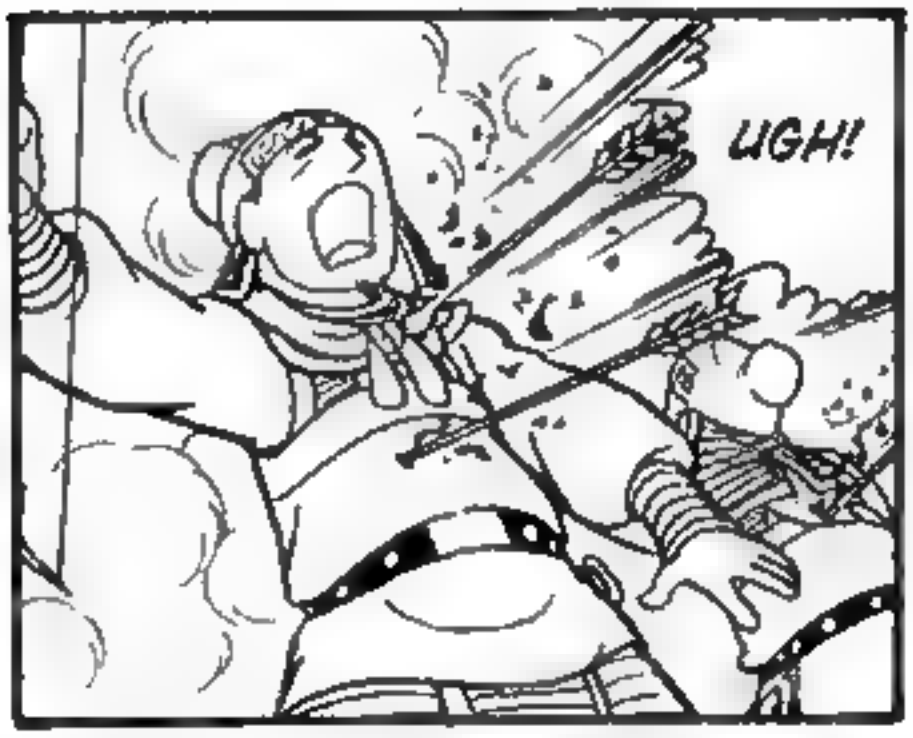

AGHH!



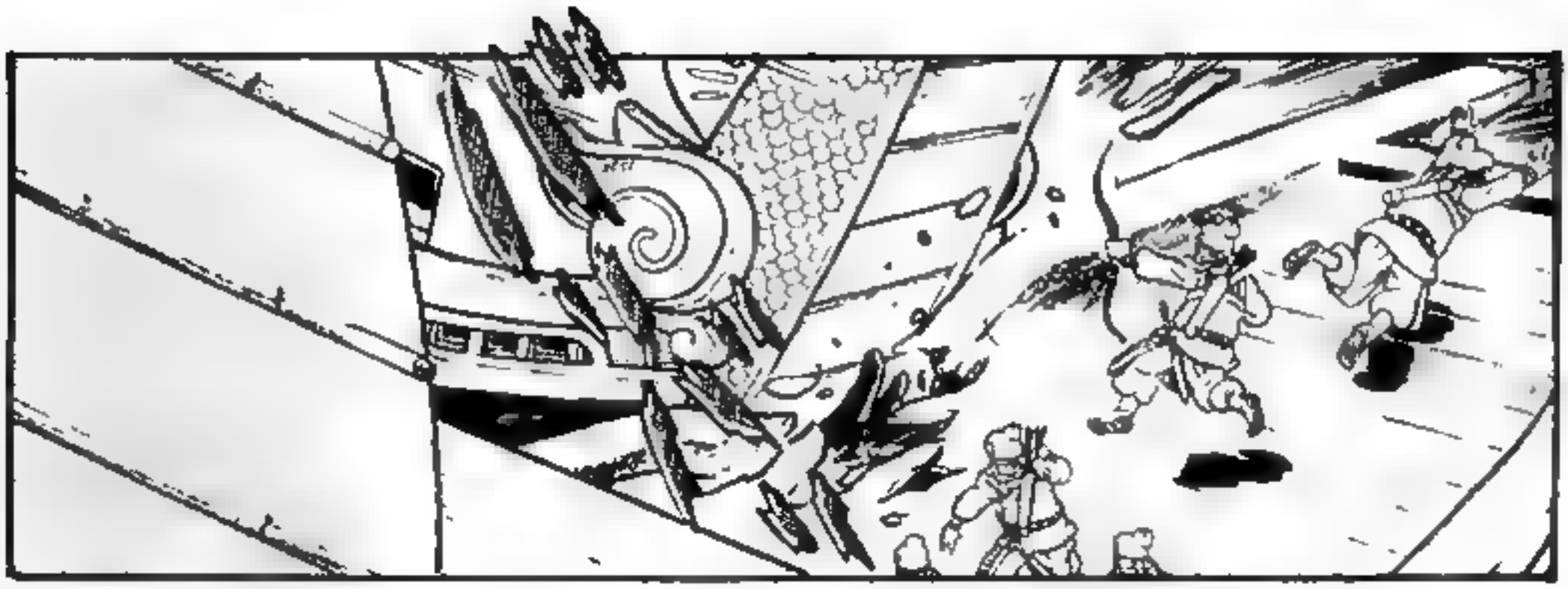


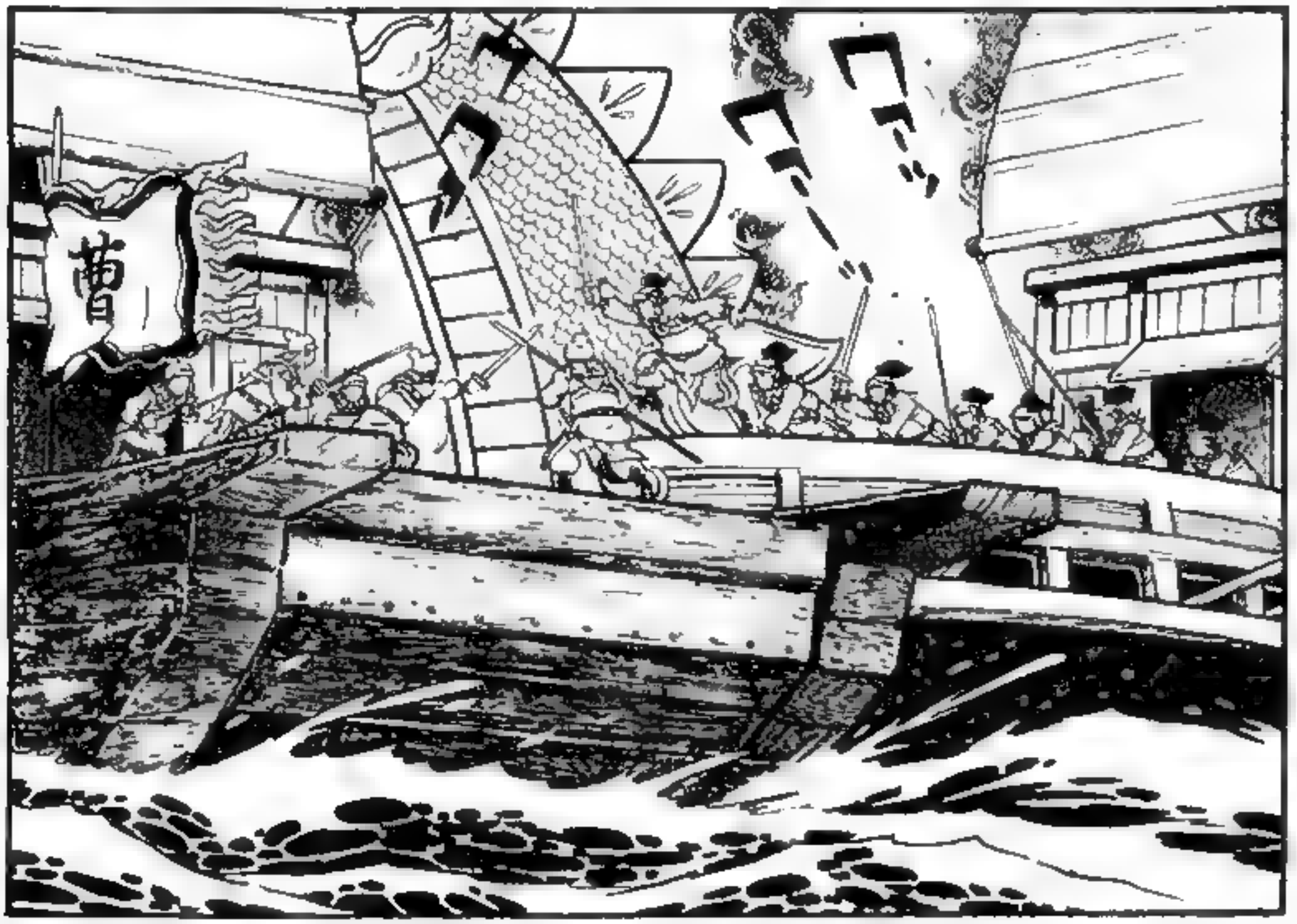

GAHH!

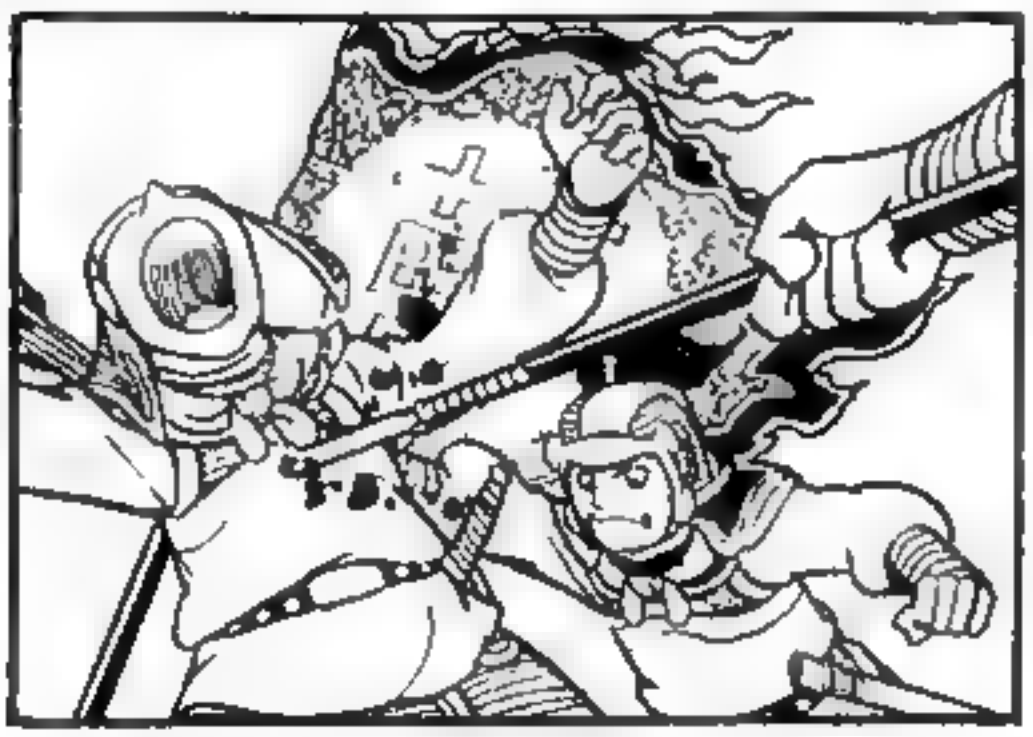

UGH!

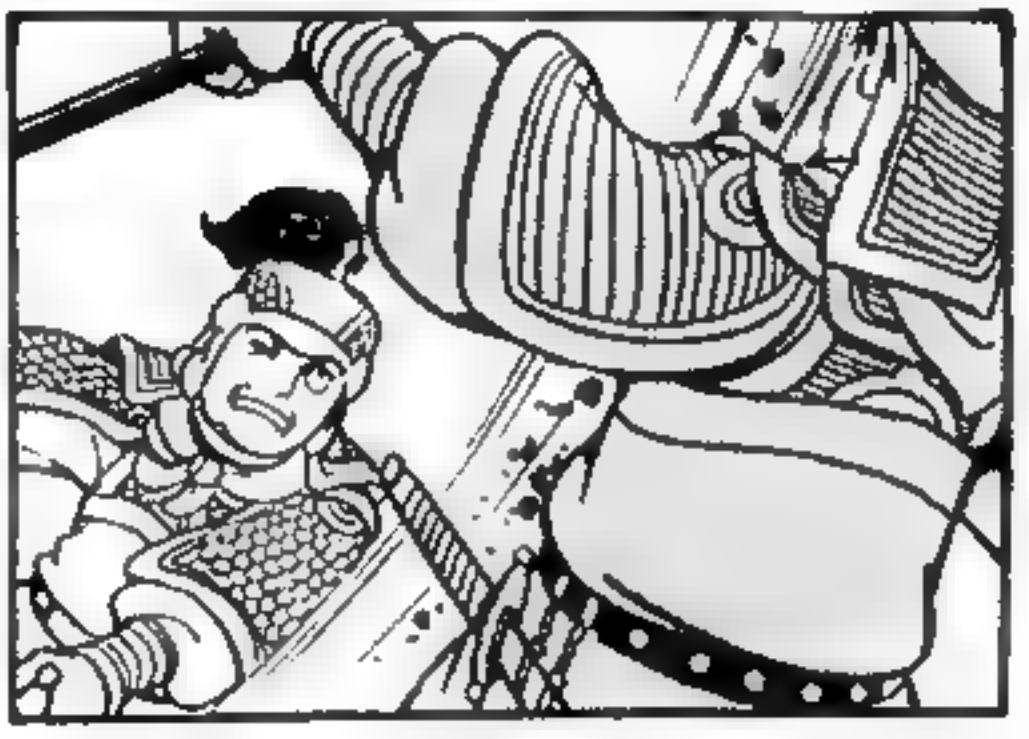
BOARD THEIR SHIPS AND SLAUGHTER EVERY LAST MAN!

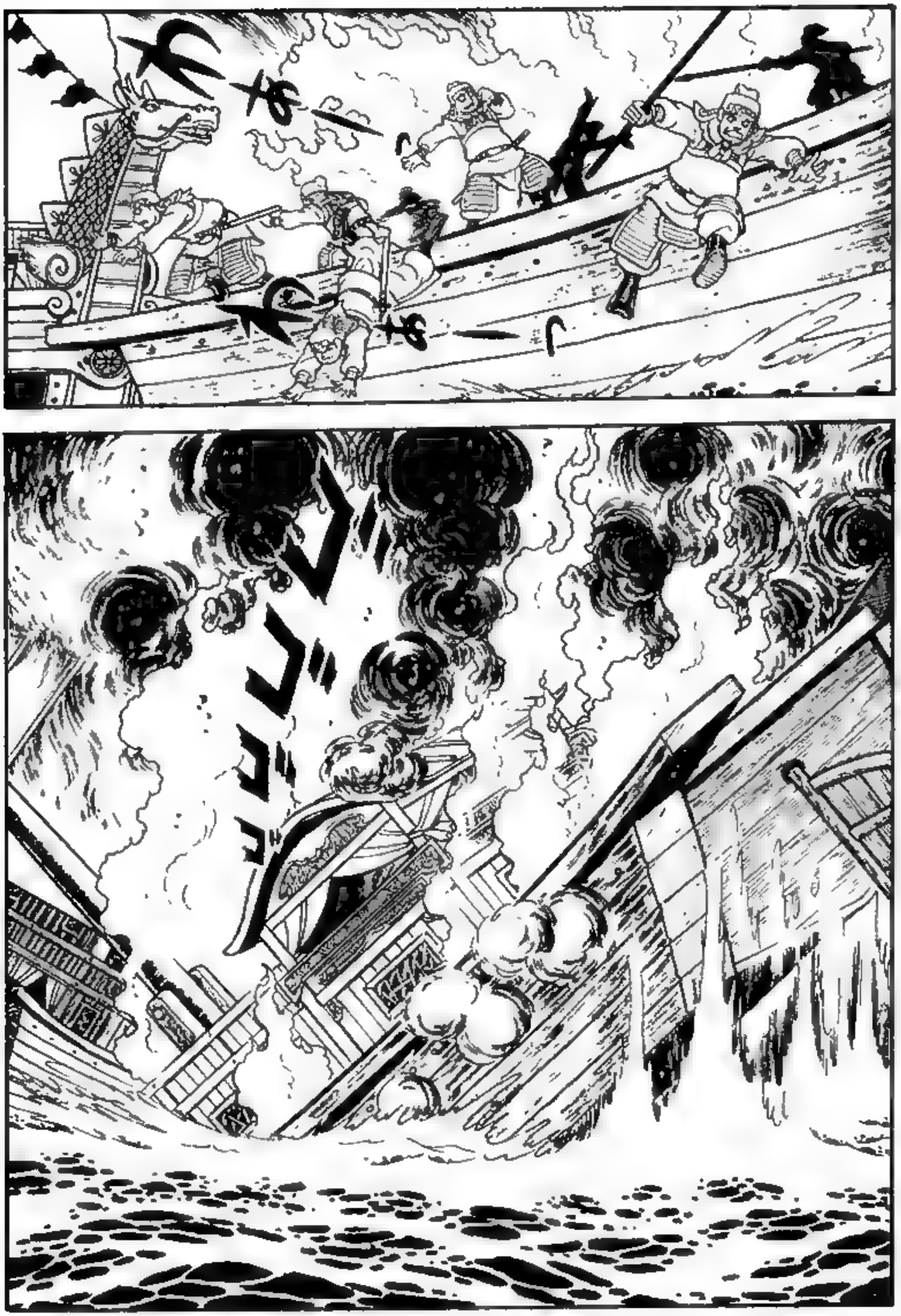
GOOD, IT'S TIME TO RAM THEIR BOATS.

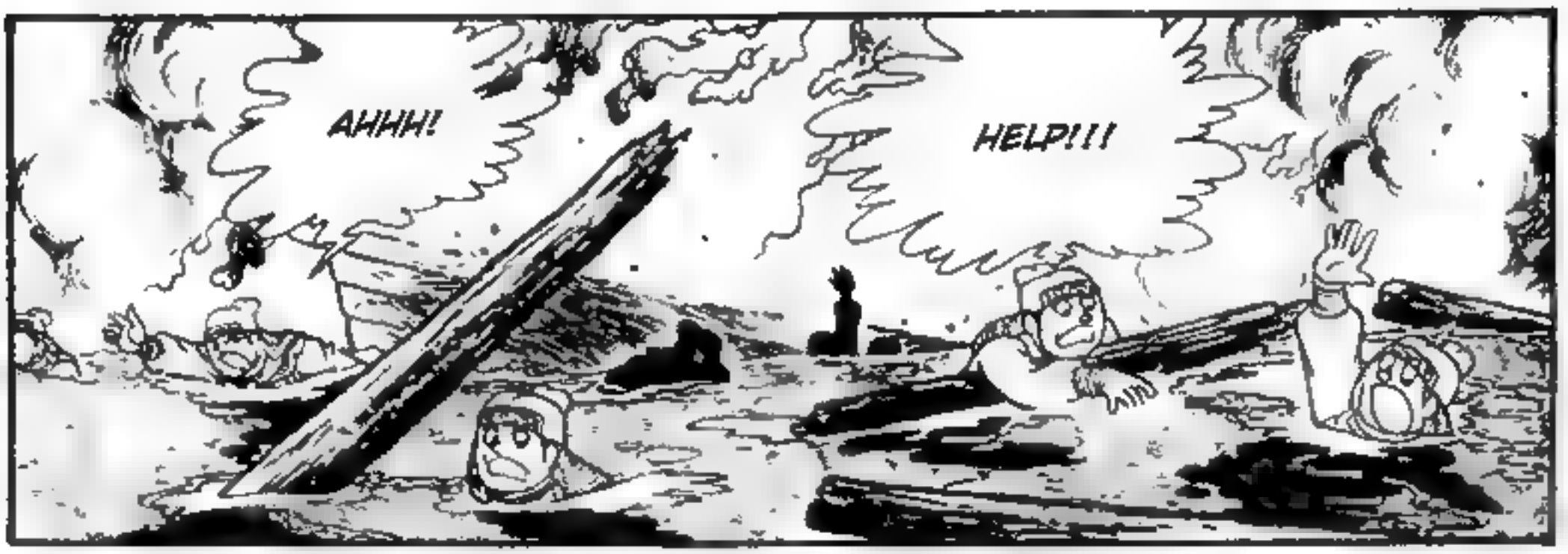











AHHH!
HELP!!!

YES...
OUR FORCES FACED A DISASTROUS DEFEAT, DID WE NOW...

THEN WHAT MUST WE DO TO WIN?

WHAT?

WHAT'S DONE IS DONE. NOTHING WILL COME FROM EXCESSIVELY FUSSING OVER THE PAST.

I-IS THE CHANCELLOR NOT GOING TO PUNISH ME?

THE PROBLEM IS THE FUTURE. HOW CAN WE ACHIEVE VICTORY IN THE FUTURE?

MOREOVER, THE CHANCELLOR'S NORTHERNER SOLDIERS ARE UNUSED TO FIGHTING ON SHIPS WHILE OUR ENEMIES HAVE SPENT MUCH TIME ON SHIPS SINCE THEY WERE CHILDREN.

I BELIEVE THE REASON FOR OUR DEFEAT THIS TIME WAS INEXPERIENCE. JINGZHOU'S NAVY HAS BEEN ILL-TRAINED, WHILE WU'S NAVY HAS BEEN TRAINING ALMOST EVERYDAY AT POYANG LAKE.

WE MUST GIVE UP ON ATTACKING FOR NOW AND FOCUS ON DEFENDING.

THEN WHAT DO YOU PROPOSE TO BEAT OUR EXPERIENCED FOES?

IN THE MEANWHILE, WE MUST TRAIN THE SOLDIERS TO FIGHT ON WATER.

I PROPOSE WE CONSTRUCT A NAVAL FORTRESS WITH STAKES LAID UNDERWATER TO SERVE AS TRAPS THAT WE CAN LURE OUR ENEMIES IN TO.

FINE, DO EXACTLY AS YOU PROPOSED.

HMM, I SEE...

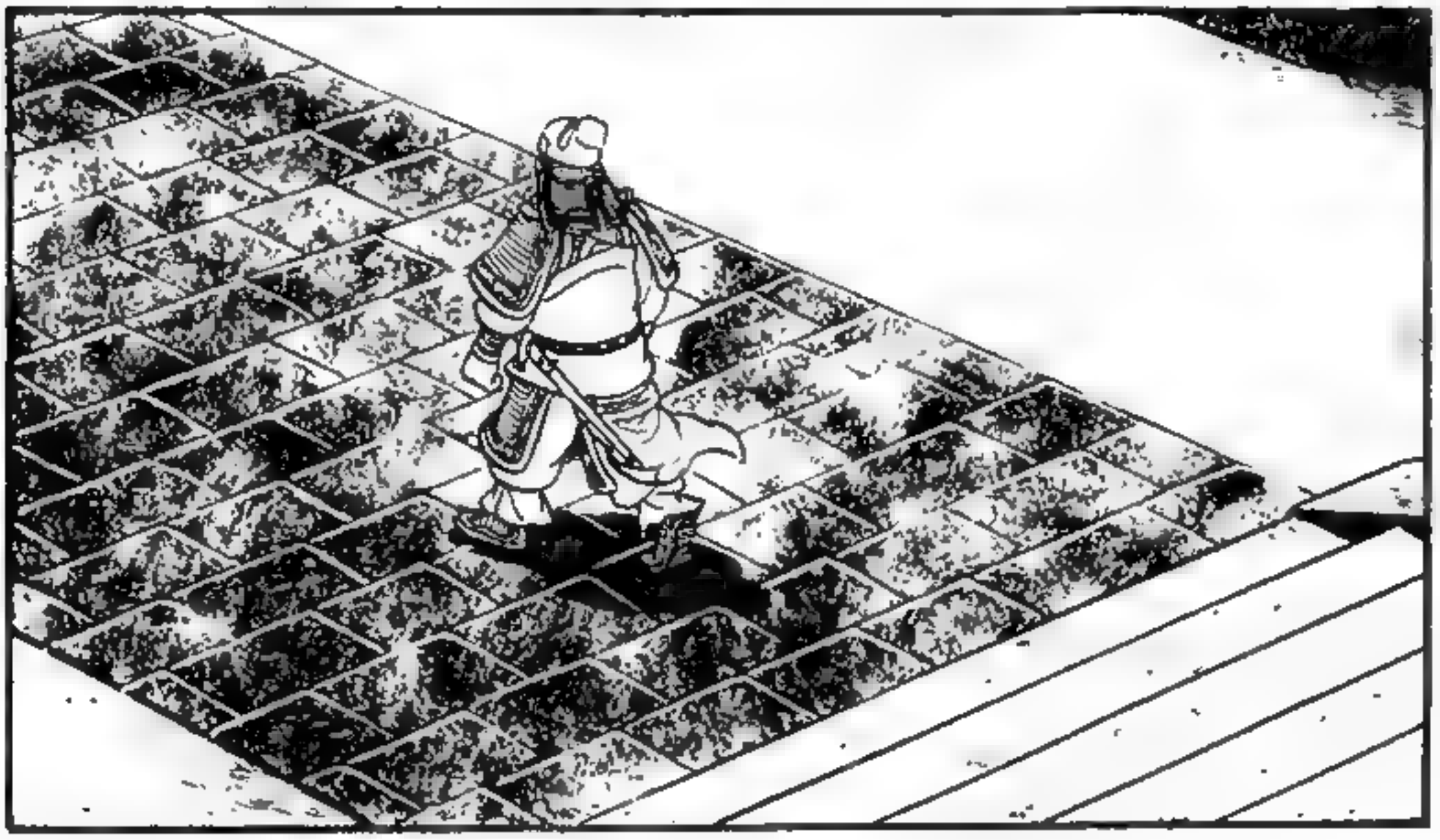
YES?

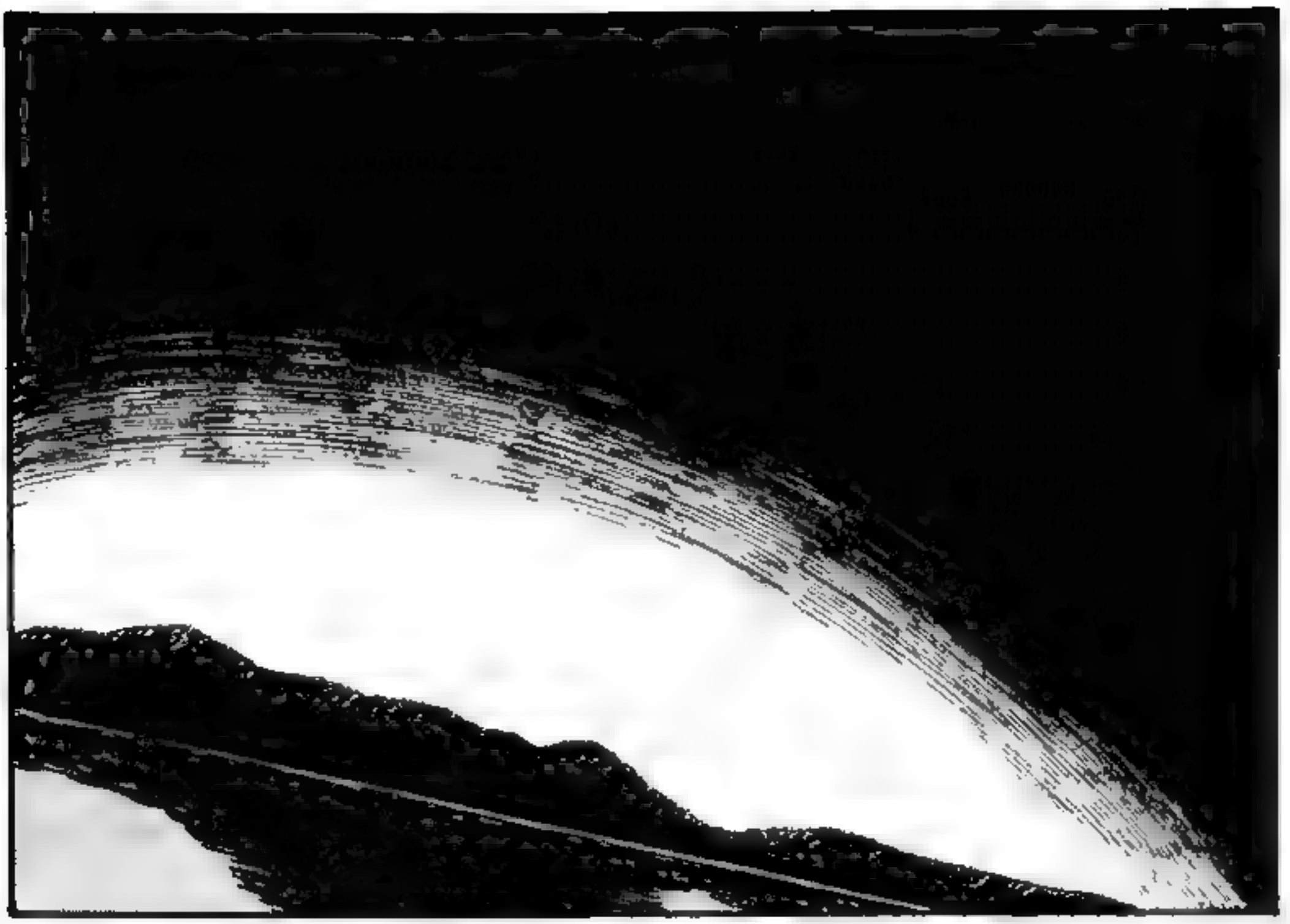
BUT LET ME SAY ONE THING, CAI MAO.

I SHAN'T BE SO FORGIVING.

IF YOU FAIL EVEN AFTER DOING ALL THAT...

YES, CHANCELLOR.
YOU MAY BE EXCUSED.





THEY'RE BUILDING SOME FORTRESS OVER THERE?

YES, I HEAR IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE QUITE MASSIVE.

HMM...

YOU CAN TELL BY HOW ALL THE LANTERNS AND TORCHES OF THEIR FORTRESS DYE THE ENTIRE SKY RED.

ISN'T IT OBVIOUS? TO SPY ON OUR ENEMIES OF COURSE.

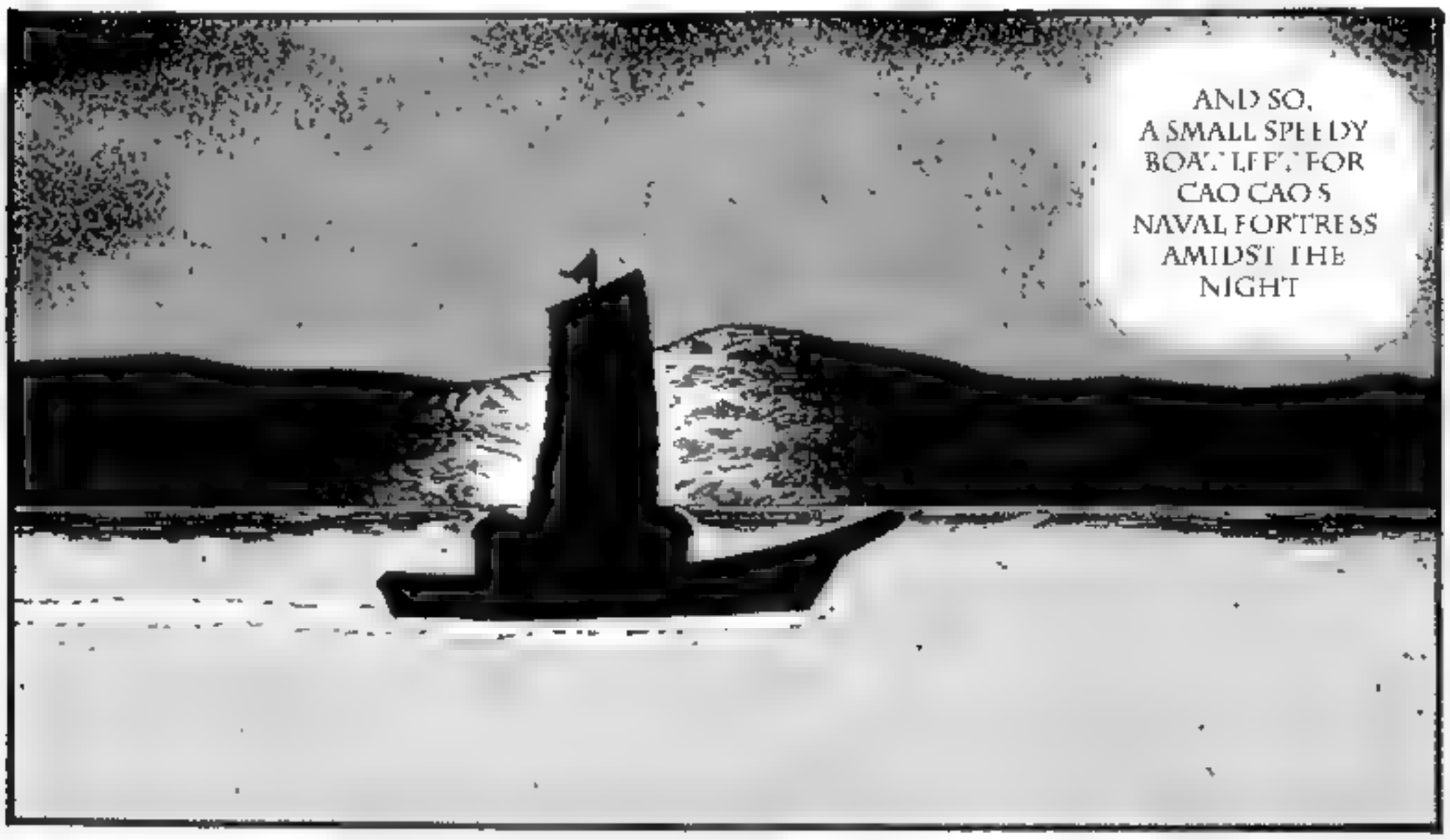
WHY, WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING, ADMIRAL?

PREPARE A SMALL BUT FAST SHIP.

B-BUT WOULDN'T THAT BE VERY DANGEROUS?

YES BUT IT SHALL BE EVEN MORE DANGEROUS TO FIGHT A WAR WITHOUT FIRST NOTING HOW OUR ENEMIES ARE SET UP.

EXCELLENT IDEA, ADMIRAL.
BUT FEAR NOT, WE SHALL HAVE MUSICIANS ON BOARD AND DRESS OUR BOAT IN ELABORATE DRAPERY TO MAKE IT SEEM LIKE ONE OF THEIR GENERALS ARE OUT ENJOYING A NICE DRINK.


AND SO, A SMALL SPEEDY BOAT LEFT FOR CAO CAO'S NAVAL FORTRESS AMIDST THE NIGHT

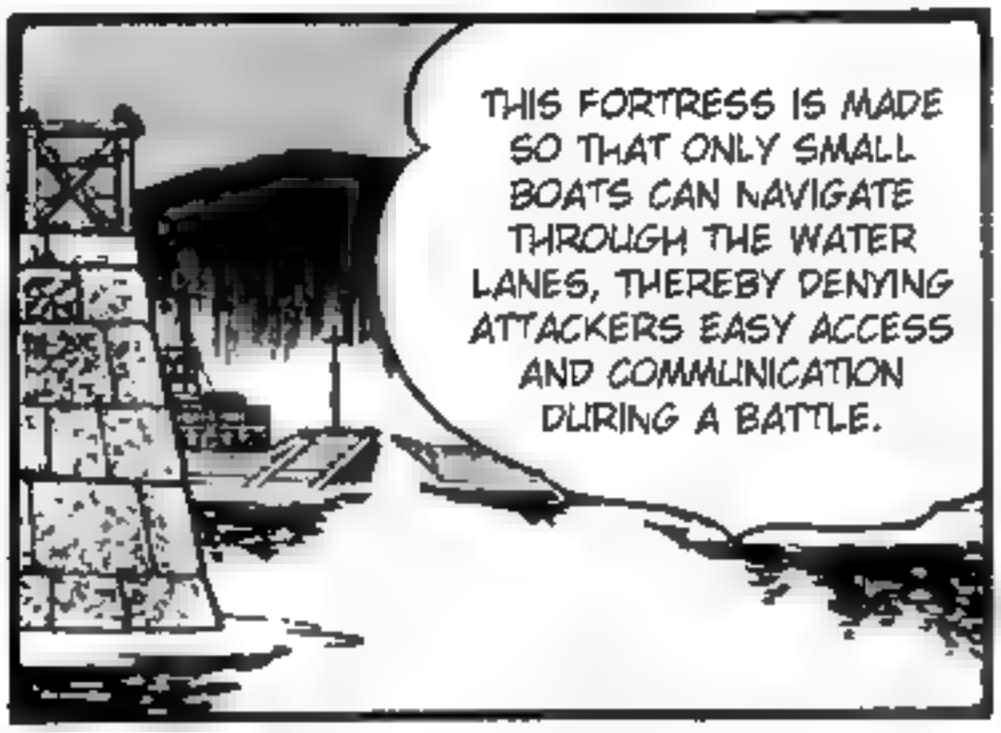
ON BOARD WERE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND DRAPERIES IN AN ATTEMPT TO DISGUISE THE SHIP'S TRUE MOTIVES

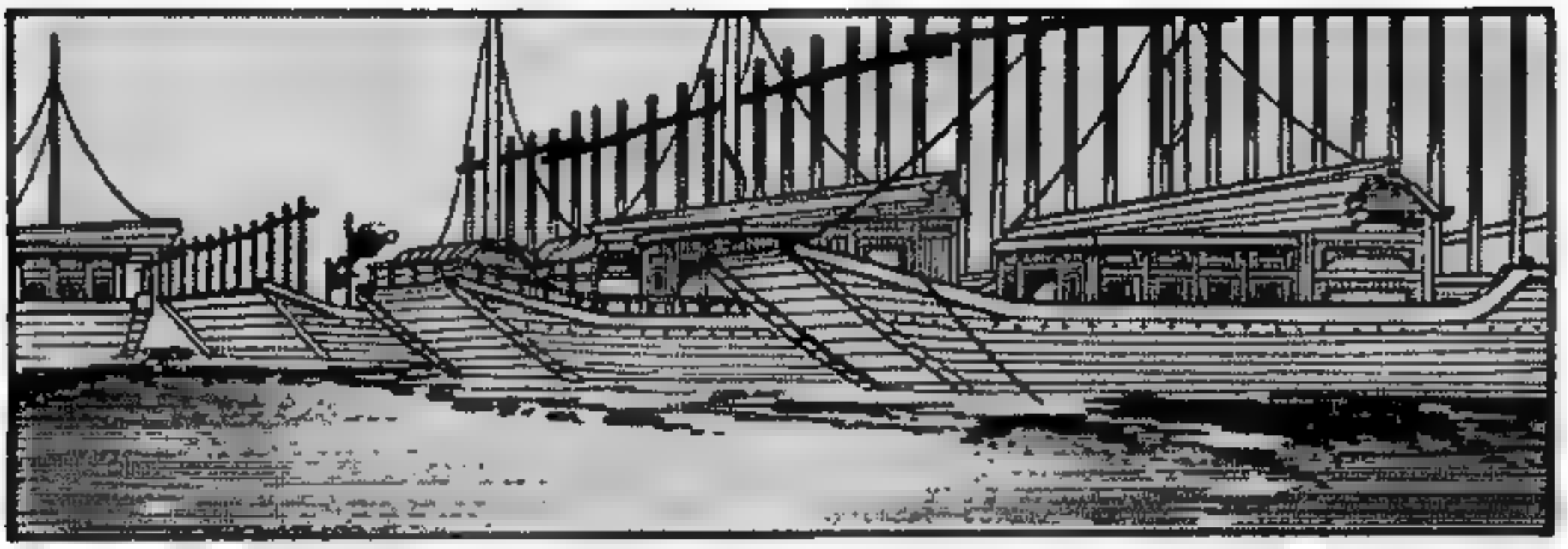
HMM...

I'M SURE THERE ARE STAKES PLACED UNDERWATER TO SINK ANY UNWARY LARGE SHIP.

24 WATER LANES ENCLOSED BY WOODEN FENCES...

LOOK, ALL THEIR LARGER SHIPS ARE ALL AT THE OUTER RIM.


THIS FORTRESS IS MADE SO THAT ONLY SMALL BOATS CAN NAVIGATE THROUGH THE WATER LANES, THEREBY DENYING ATTACKERS EASY ACCESS AND COMMUNICATION DURING A BATTLE.

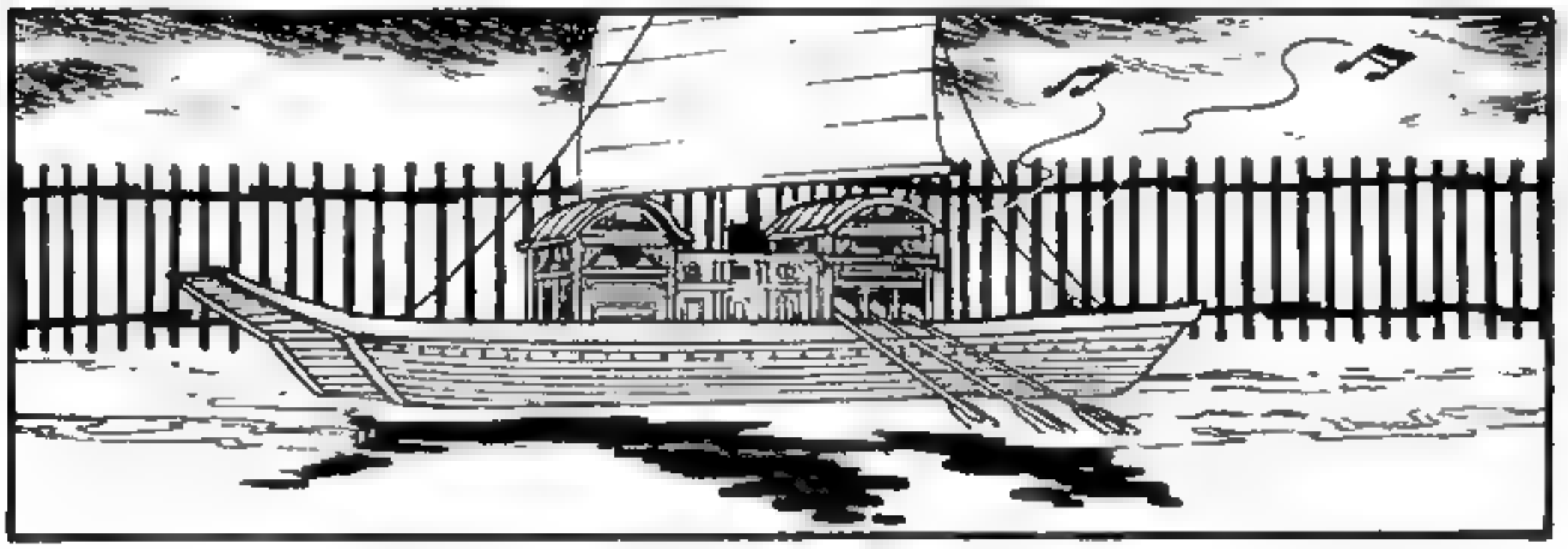


THIS IS MOST LIKELY THE WORK OF CAI MAO AND ZHANG YUN OF JINGZHOU.

MOST IMPRESSIVE. I HAD NO IDEA CAO CAO HAD SOMEONE THIS KNOWLEDGEABLE IN NAVAL WARFARE!

TAKE US IN CLOSER. I WANT A BETTER LOOK.

LOOKS LIKE I'VE BEEN UNDERESTI-MATING MY ENEMIES. I MUST BE MORE CAREFUL FROM NOW ON...



ONE OF OUR GENERAL SEEMS TO BE MERRY-MAKING ON HIS BOAT WITH DRINKS AND MUSIC.

WHAT IS IT?

THE GUARDS ARE CONFUSED AS TO WHAT TO DO SO THEY AWAIT YOUR ORDERS, CHANCELLOR...

WHAT!?

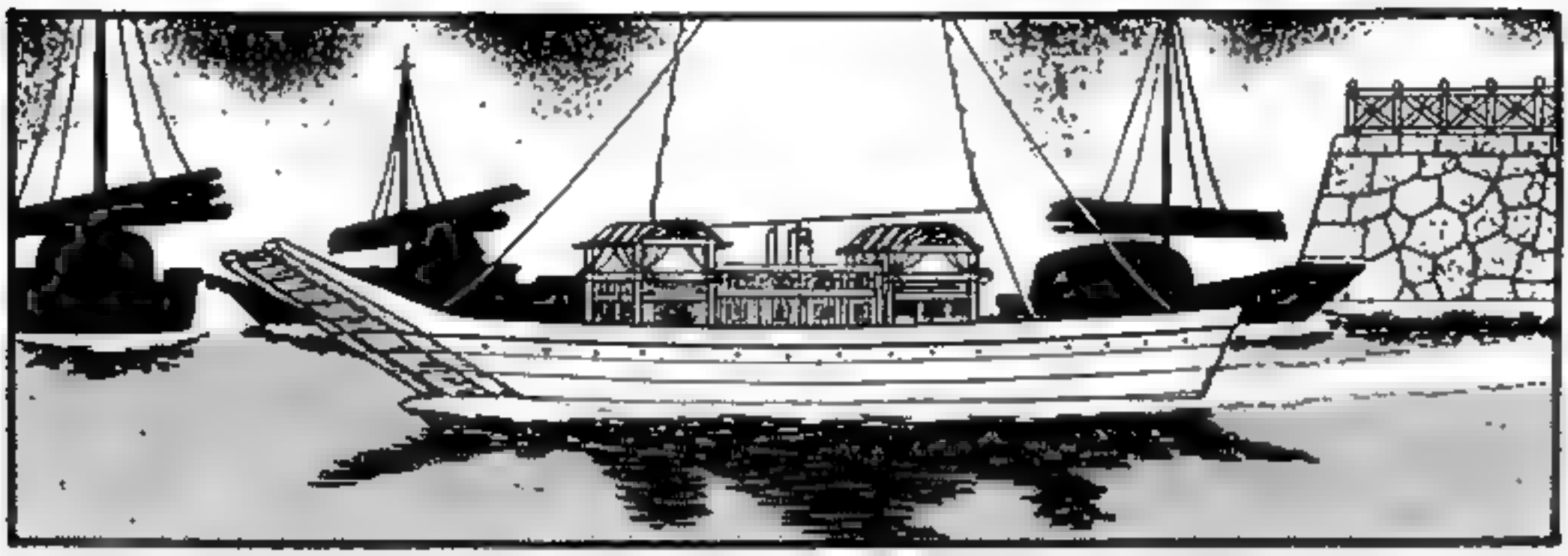
BUT I DON'T THINK ONE OF THE GENERALS OF JINGZHOU WOULD BE PLAYING AROUND CONSIDERING THEIR RECENT CRUSHING DEFEAT...

I DOUBT IT'S ANY OF MY GENERALS FROM THE NORTH SINCE THEY'RE UNACCUSTOMED TO BEING ON BOATS...

THEN JUST WHO WOULD BE ON THAT B-

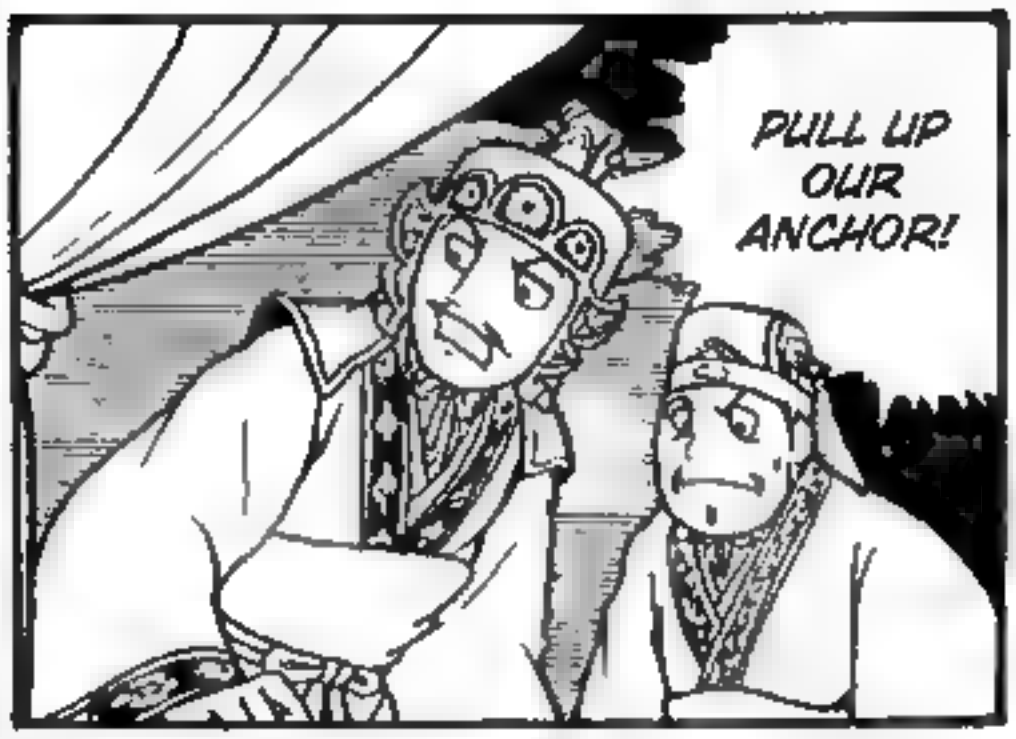
Y-YES, SIR!

GO CATCH THAT BOAT THIS INSTANT!

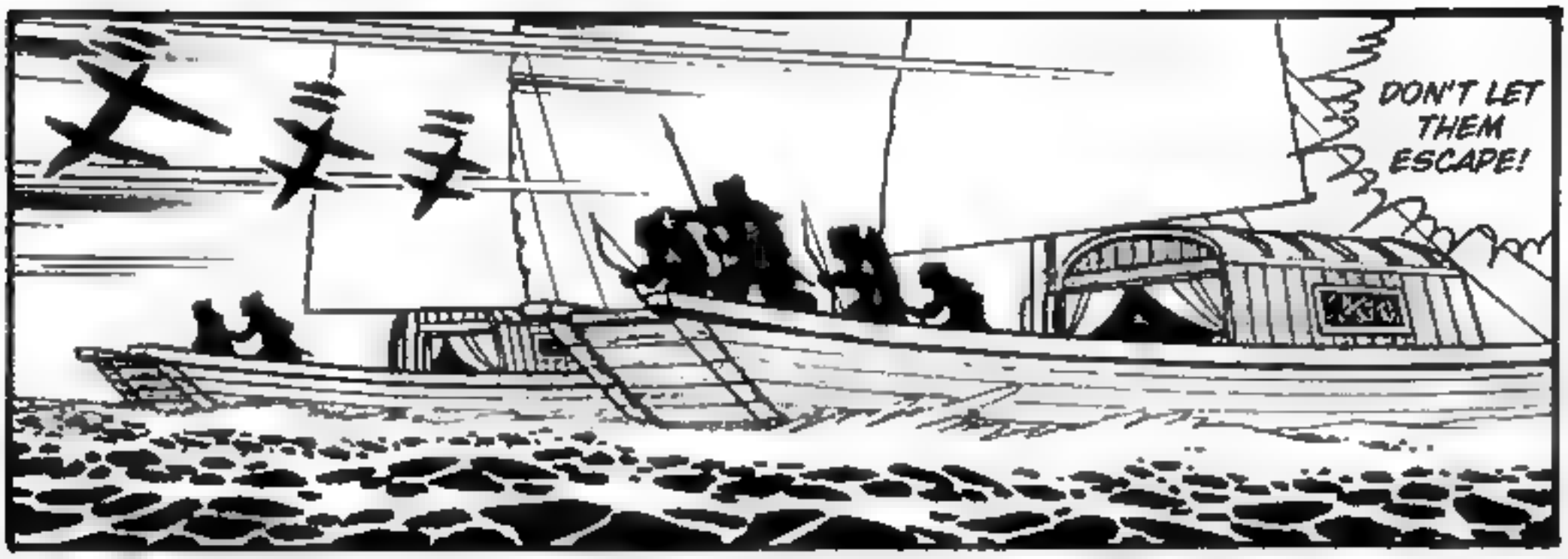


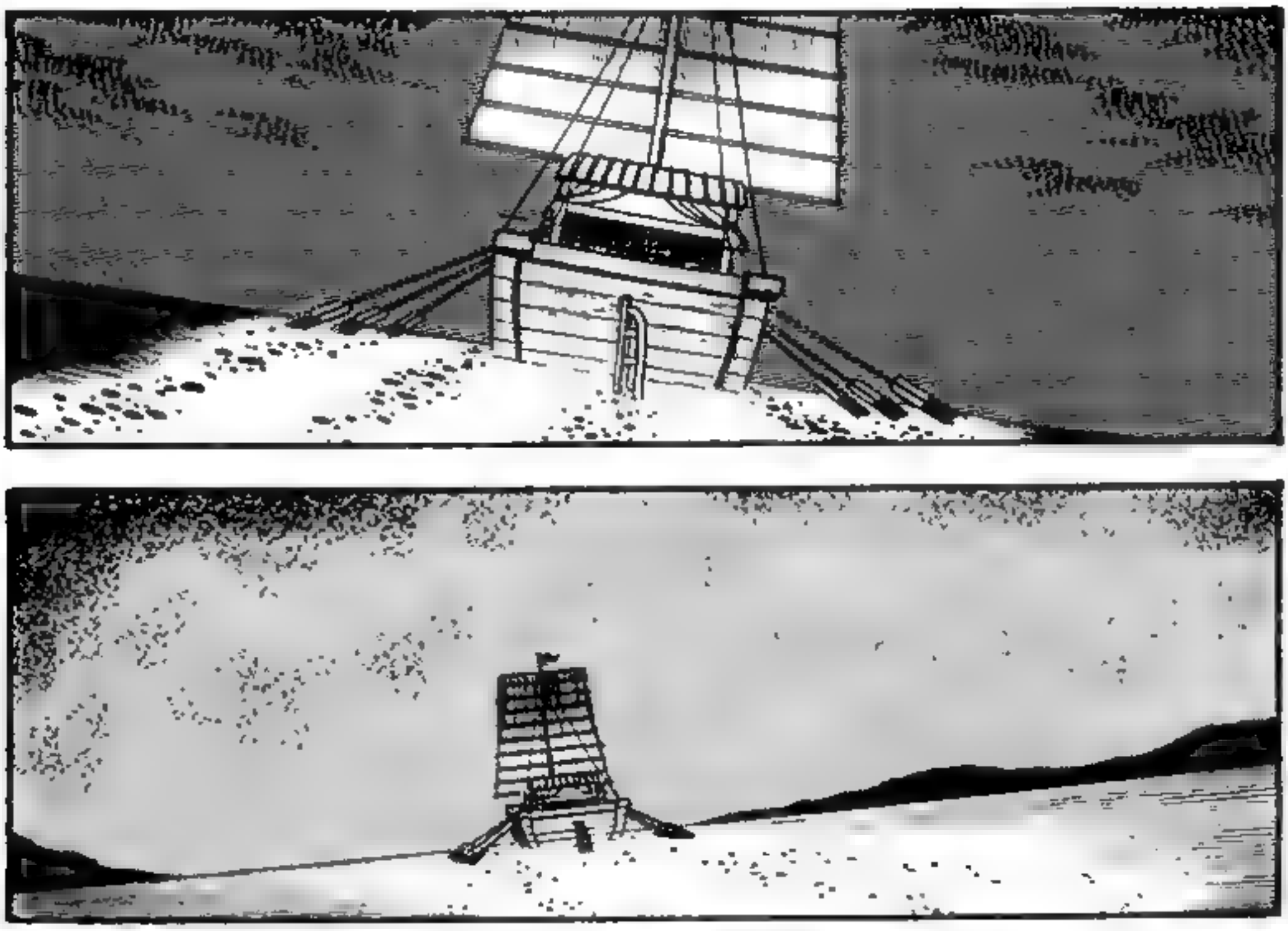
ENEMY SHIPS ARE HEADED THIS WAY, ADMIRAL!

LOOKS LIKE THEY REALIZED WHAT WE WERE UP TO.


PULL UP OUR ANCHOR!

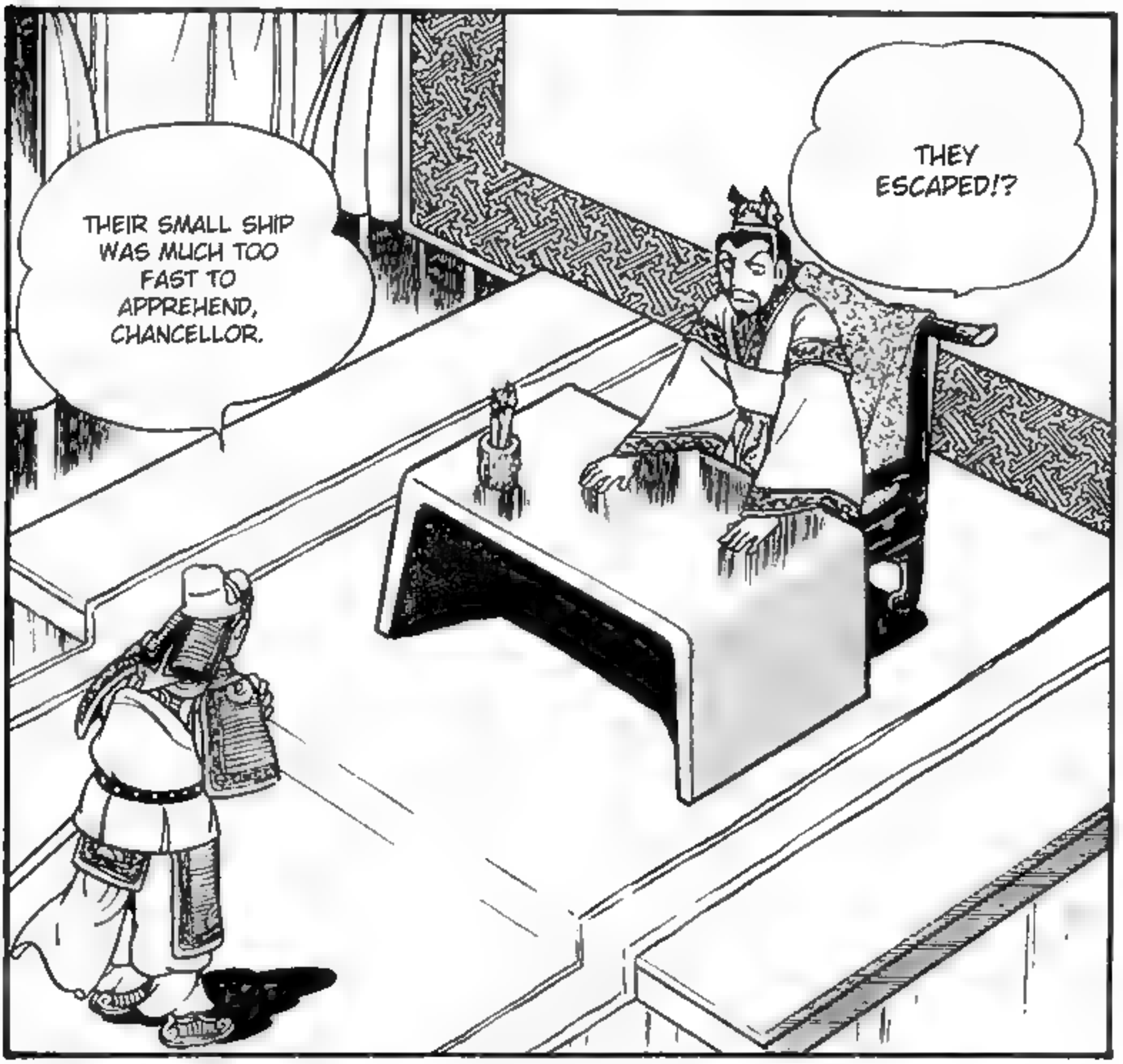
HEAD BACK TO OUR BASE AT FULL SPEED!

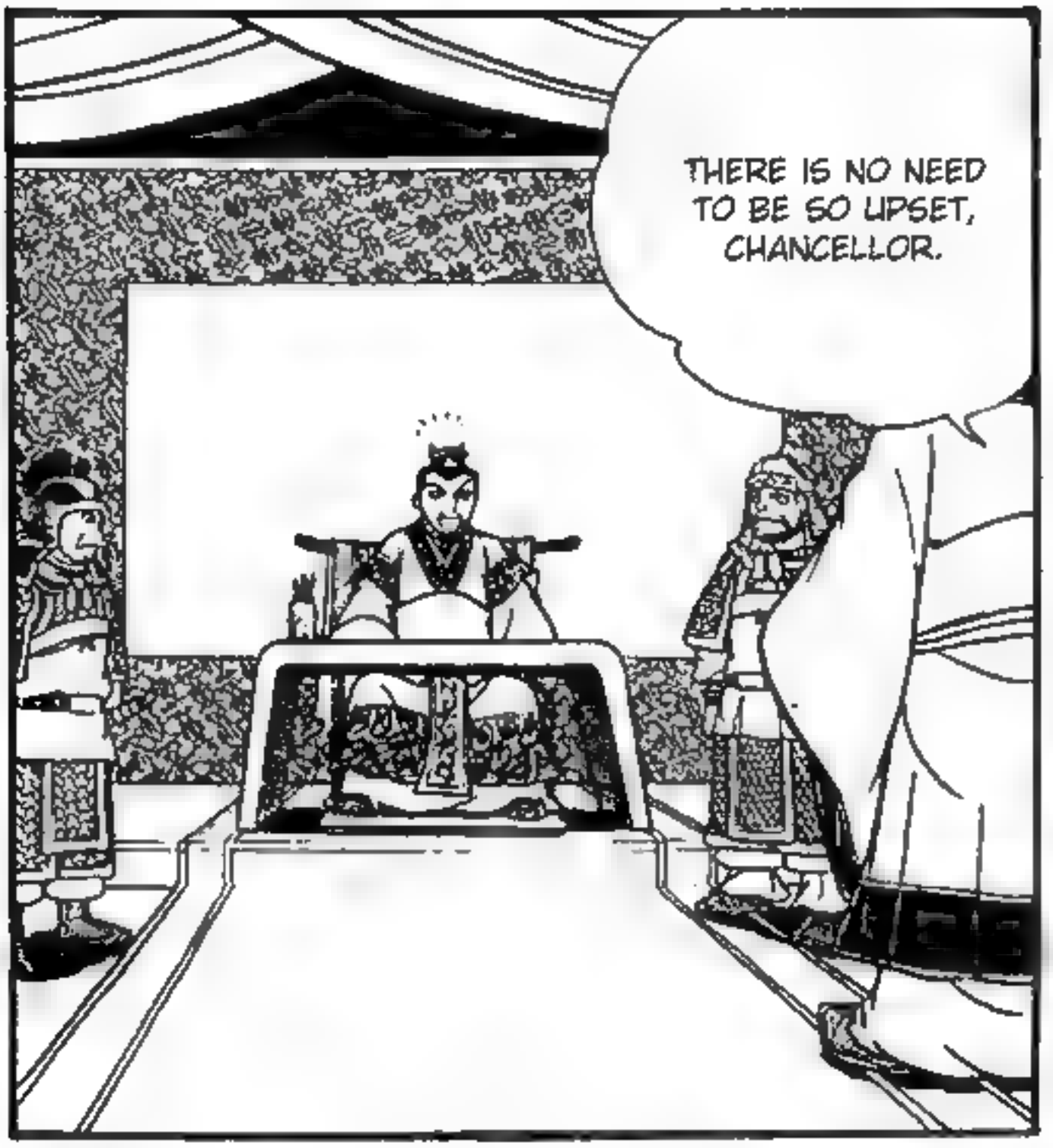

DON'T LET THEM ESCAPE!



IT'S NO GOOD, SIR. THE ENEMY BOAT IS JUST TOO FAST COMPARED TO OUR LARGER ONE.

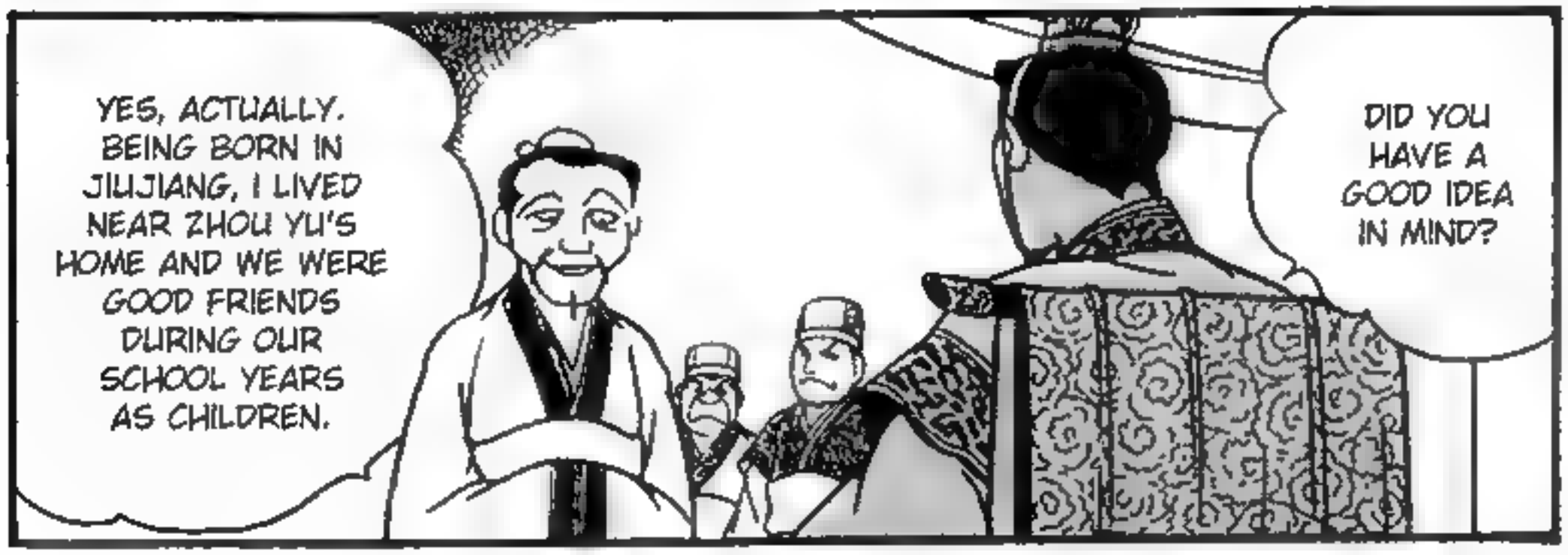
# MEETING OF OLD FRIENDS




THERE IS NO NEED TO BE SO UPSET, CHANCELLOR.

AT THIS RATE, WE'LL SUFFER ANOTHER CRUSHING DEFEAT!

AH, IF IT ISN'T JIANG GAN.


YES, ACTUALLY. BEING BORN IN JIUJIANG, I LIVED NEAR ZHOU YU'S HOME AND WE WERE GOOD FRIENDS DURING OUR SCHOOL YEARS AS CHILDREN.
DID YOU HAVE A GOOD IDEA IN MIND?

OH?

I SHALL TRY TO PERSUADE HIM TO COME TO OUR SIDE.

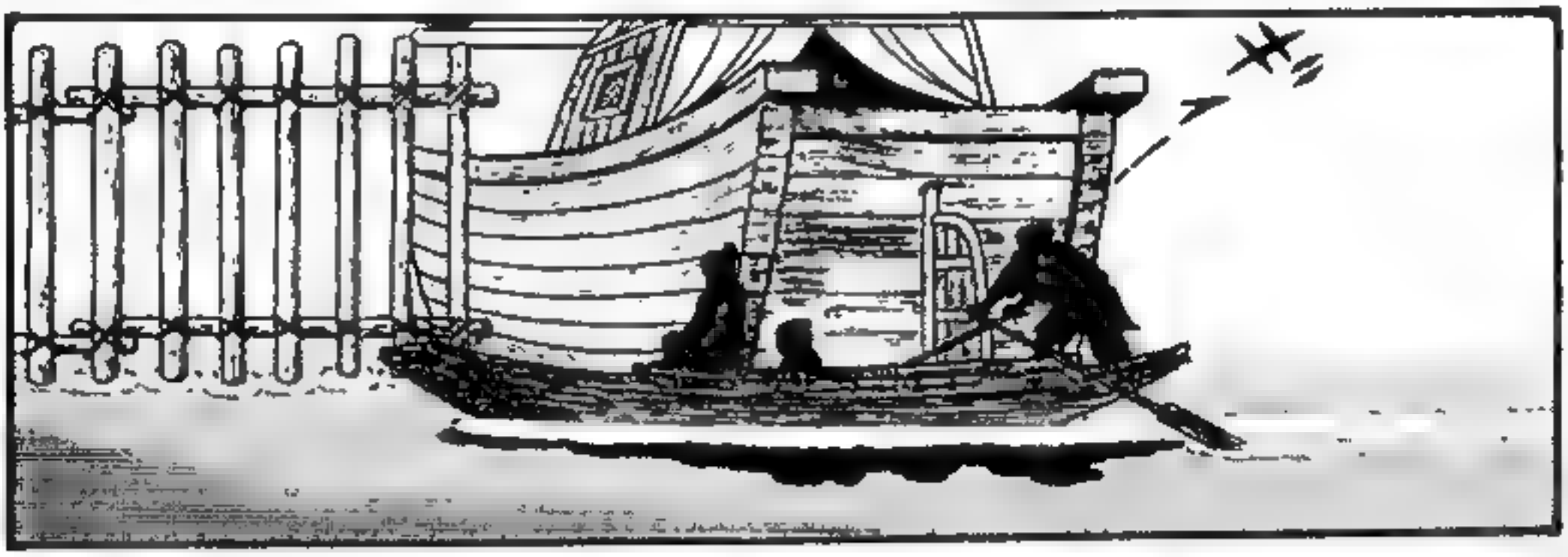
AND?

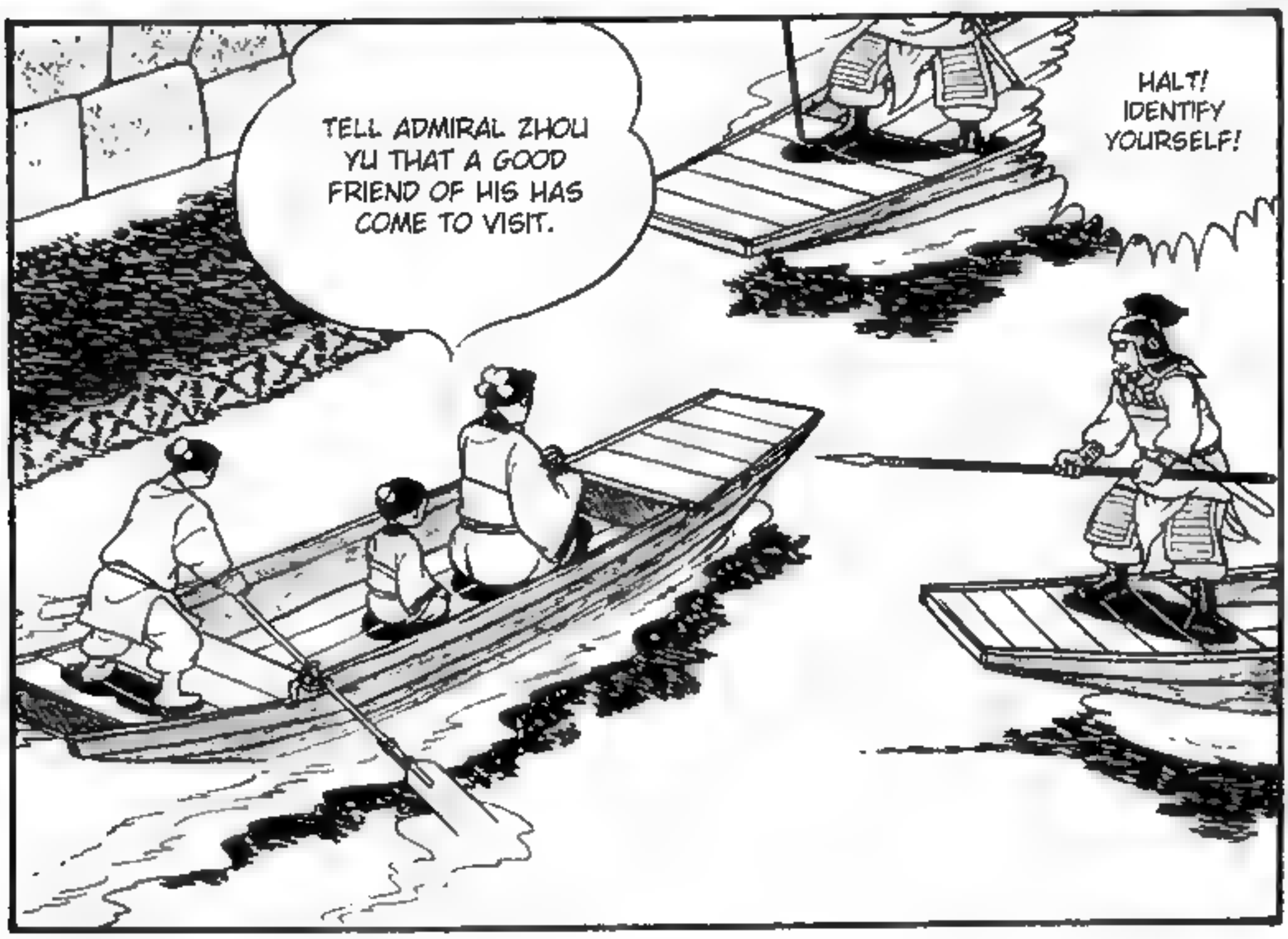
WHAT SORT OF GIFTS WILL YOU NEED TO BRING ALONG?

A WU WITHOUT ZHOU YU IS A HOUSE WITH NO WALLS NOR PILLARS. I SHALL PRAY FOR YOUR SUCCESS, JIANG GAN.

FINE.

ZHOU YU IS NOT A MAN THAT WILL BE SWAYED BY MATERIAL GIFTS. I SHALL TRY TO CONVINCE HIM BY USING SCHOLARLY WISDOM, SO ONLY LEND ME A SMALL BOAT AND A BOY AS MY ATTENDANT.




TELL ADMIRAL ZHOU YU THAT A GOOD FRIEND OF HIS HAS COME TO VISIT.
HALT! IDENTIFY YOURSELF!

PLEASE WAIT RIGHT HERE, SIR.

A FRIEND OF ADMIRAL ZHOU?

A MAN NAMED JIANG GAN WISHES TO MEET WITH YOU, ADMIRAL.

JIANG GAN?

WHAT IS IT?

EXCUSE ME, SIR.

AH, SO THAT'S WHAT'S GOING ON.

I HAD LAST HEARD JIANG GAN WAS UNDER CAO CAO'S SERVICE...

GENTLEMEN, LISTEN CLOSELY.

WHISPER WHISPER

MY APOLOGIES FOR MAKING YOU WAIT. THE ADMIRAL IS EAGERLY WAITING TO MEET YOU, SIR.

AH, THAT'S GOOD.

THIS WAY, SIR.

吳

周

THE SAME HERE, MY OLD FRIEND.

JIANG GAN, IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE UNDER CAO CAO'S ORDERS NOW, WOULD YOU...?

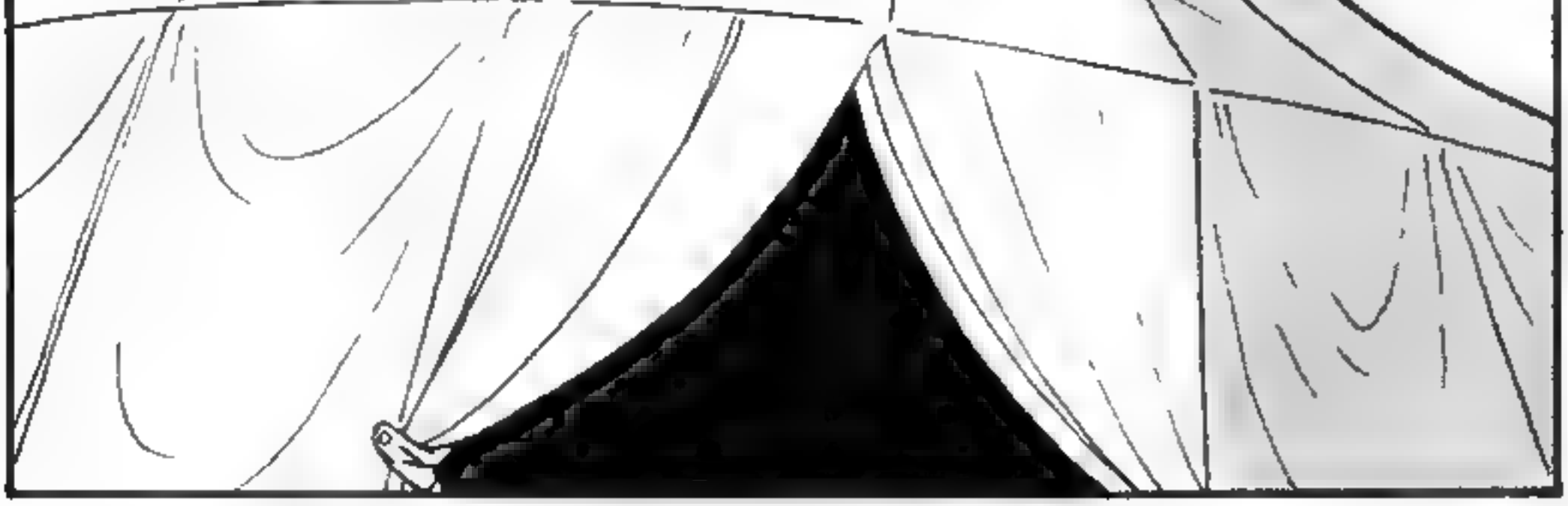
I'M QUITE AMAZED THAT YOU WEREN'T HIT BY SOME STRAY ARROW IN THE MIDST OF THIS BATTLEFIELD. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE IN THESE TIMES OF WAR?

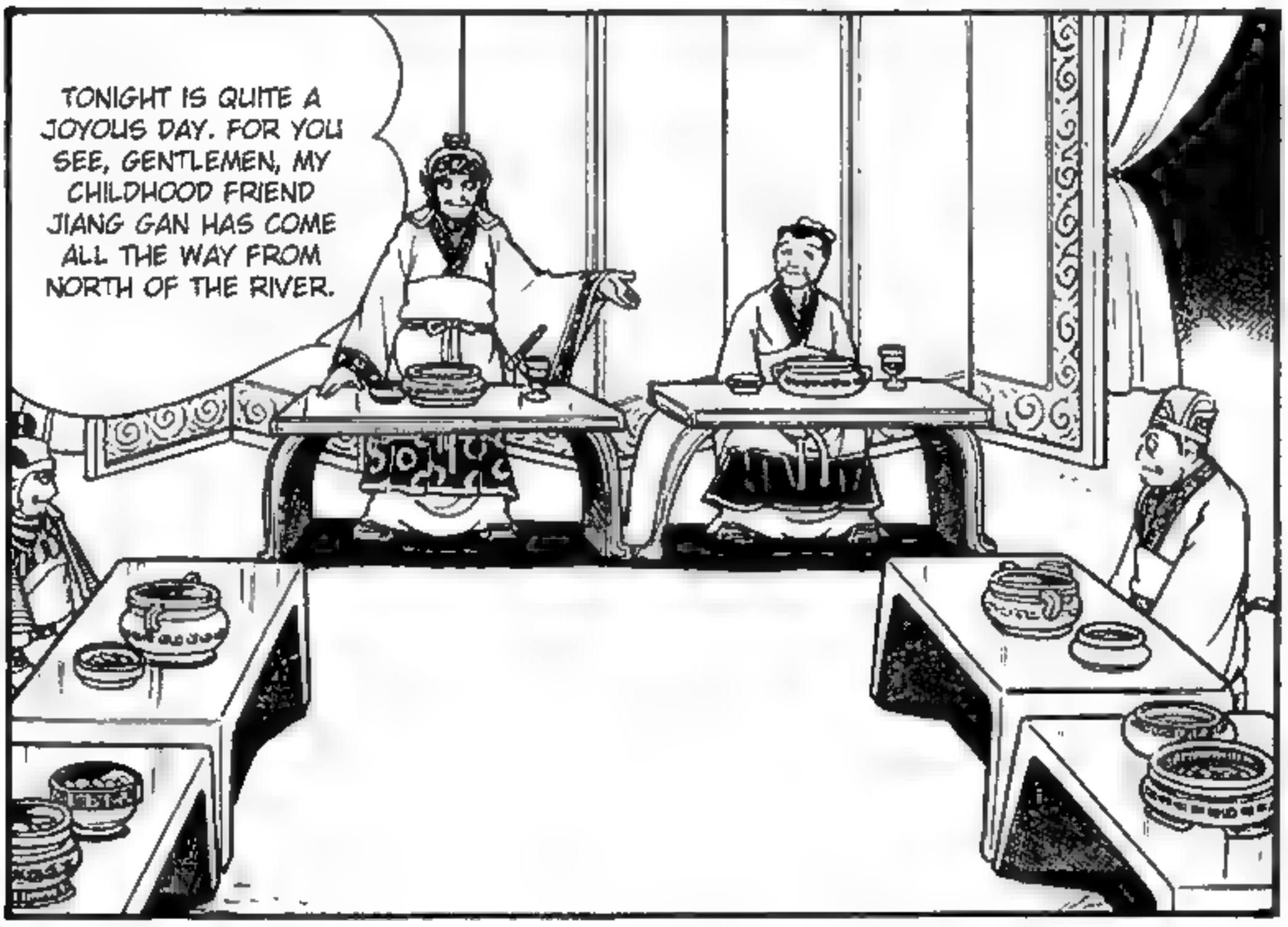
MY BAD, IT WAS MERELY A JOKE MADE IN BAD TASTE.

周

I'M QUITE OFFENDED TO HEAR SUCH ACCUSATIONS FROM MY OLD FRIEND. I ONLY CAME WITH THE INTENTION OF CONGRATULATING YOU ON YOUR RECENT SUCCESSES...

NOW COME THIS WAY AND LET US FORGET ABOUT THIS WAR WITH FOOD AND DRINKS!




TONIGHT IS QUITE A JOYOUS DAY. FOR YOU SEE, GENTLEMEN, MY CHILDHOOD FRIEND JIANG GAN HAS COME ALL THE WAY FROM NORTH OF THE RIVER.

ONE MORE THING. MY GOOD FRIEND JIANG GAN IS, IN NO WAY, A MESSENGER OF CAO CAO.

THOUGH I WAS PLANNING TO ABSTAIN FROM DRINKING DURING THIS WAR, I SHALL MAKE A SPECIAL EXCEPTION FOR JUST TONIGHT.

TAISHI CI.

YES?

YOU WOULD BE OFFENDING BOTH HIM AND I IF YOU THINK HE ONLY CAME TO DO CAO CAO'S NEFARIOUS BIDDING, SUCH AS TRYING TO CONVINCE ME TO SUBMIT.

YES, SIR.

THIS IS THE COMMANDING SWORD BESTOWED UPON ME BY OUR LORD SUN QUAN. IF ANYBODY DARES TO MENTION ANYTHING ABOUT THE WAR AND RUIN TONIGHT'S SPECIAL OCCASION, USE THIS SWORD AND SLAY HIM.

NOW THEN, LET US DRINK TO OUR HEART'S CONTENT!

HA HA HA HA

周

HA HA HA HA

周

吳

EXCELLENT IDEA.

JIANG GAN, TONIGHT'S FESTIVITES ARE FAR FROM OVER. WHY DON'T WE TAKE A STROLL OUTSIDE TO SOBER UP A LITTLE BIT BEFORE RETURNING TO OUR DRINKS?

AH...

YES, VERY IMPRESSIVE.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? IMPRESSIVE, RIGHT?

OH, HOW I MISS THOSE DAYS WHEN WE STUDIED TOGETHER AND CHATTED AWAY WHAT WE MIGHT DO IN THE FUTURE. WHO KNEW THAT I WOULD GROW UP TO MEET SUCH A WISE LORD WHO WOULD ENTRUST HIS ENTIRE ARMY TO ME?

NO MATTER WHO MAY TRY TO PERSUADE ME, MY LOYALTY TO WU SHALL BE AS CONSTANT AS THE SUN.

I SHALL NEVER FORGET SUN QUAN'S KINDNESS.

HA HA HA

HA HA HA HA

EVERYONE MUST BE WAITING FOR US. LET US GO BACK INSIDE AND HAVE ANOTHER ROUND OF DRINKS.

SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING GENTLEMEN.

HERE, SIR.

POUR MY GOOD FRIEND JIANG GAN A DRINK.

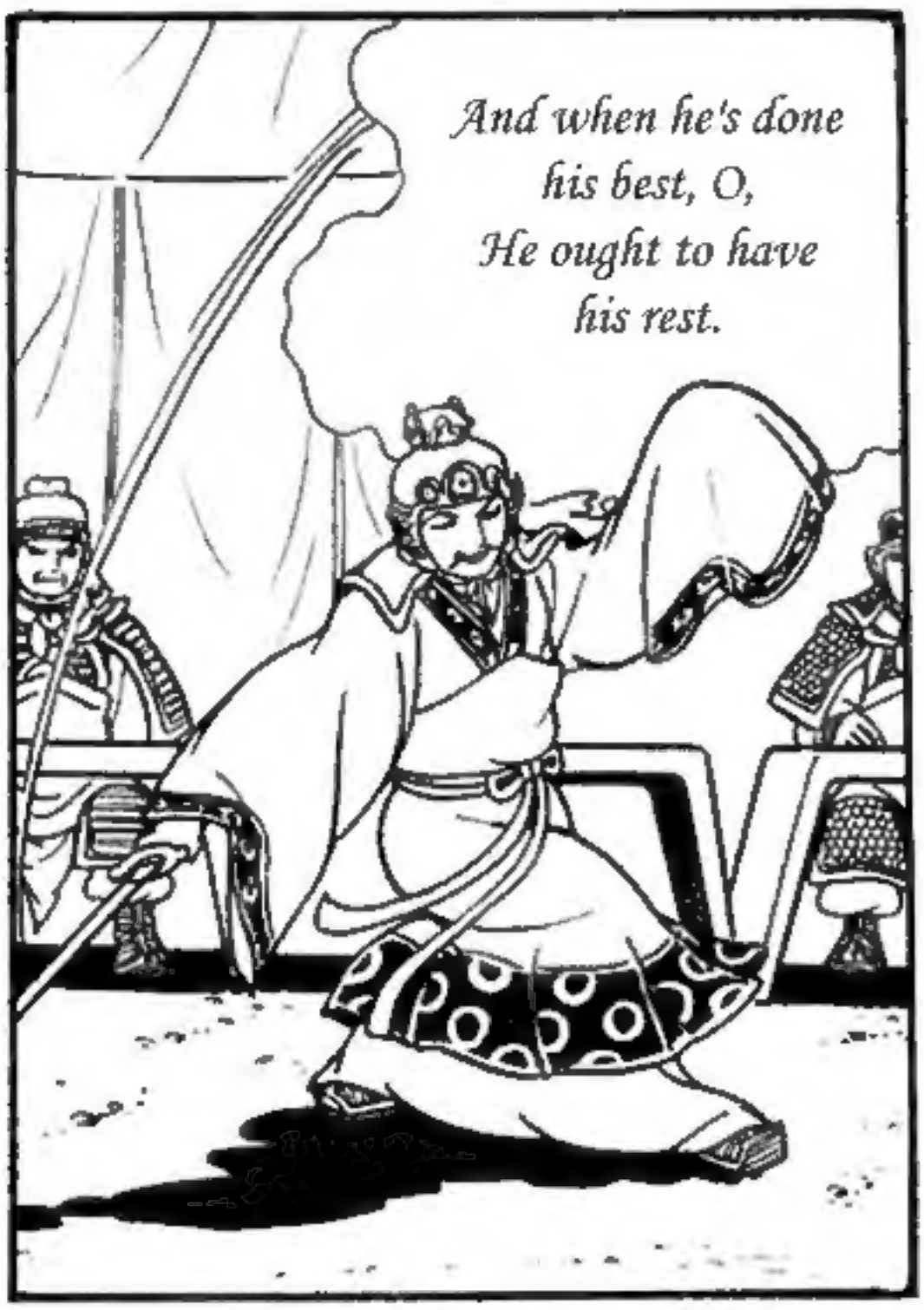
PLEASE ACCEPT A GLASS FROM ME AS WELL, SIR.

I SEE...

THESE MEN ARE THE BEST AND BRAVEST THAT WU HAS TO OFFER. YOU MIGHT EVEN CALL THIS THE "GATHERING OF HEROES."

ALLOW ME TO SHOW YOU.

I OFTEN PERFORM A SWORD DANCE AT THESE GATHERINGS.


*And when he's done his best, O, He ought to have his rest.*

*When a man is in the world, O, He ought to do his best.*

CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

*And when I have my rest, O,*
*I'll quaff my wine with zest.*
*And when I'm drunk*
*as drunk can be, O,*
*I'll sing the madman's litany.**

JIANG GAN, LET US SLEEP IN THE SAME ROOM AND TALK THE NIGHT AWAY.

AHH... MOVING AROUND SO MUCH IS GETTING ME ALL FLUSHED.

LET'S GO.

*ZHOU YU'S SONG TAKEN FROM C.H. BREWITT-TAYLOR'S TRANSLATION OF ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS

TRANSLATED BY HOX

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電子書籍版

# 三国志

## 24

横山 光輝

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